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ACT OF CONSECRATION, To the Sacred Heart of Jesus;

Approved by the Decree of the Holy Congregation of Rites, April 22nd, 1875.

“O Jesus! my Redeemer and my God! Notwithstanding the great love which Thou dost bear to men, for whose redemption Thou has poured out Thy precious blood to the uttermost, Thou art little loved by them. Nay, they offend and outrage Thee greatly, specially by blasphemies and profanations of Thy holy festivals. Oh! that I might render Thy Divine Heart some satisfaction, that I might make some reparation for the monstrous ingratitude and unthankfulness shown towards Thee by the greatest part of men! I would that I could show Thee how much I desire to honor Thy adorable and most loving Heart, and to return It love for love, in the face of all men; and thus to increase more and more Thy glory.

“I would that I might obtain the conversion of sinners, and shake off indifference from so many others who, if they happily belong to Thy Church, have not at heart the interests of Thy glory, and that of the Church which is Thy Spouse.

Would that I could obtain, also, that those Catholics who do not cease to show themselves such by many outward works of charity, but who, through too great attachment to their own opinions, refuse to submit themselves to the decisions of the Holy See, or cherish sentiments that estrange them from its magistracy, may return to a better mind, and be persuaded that he who hears not the Church in everything, hears not God, Who is with Her.

“To gain then these holy ends, and to obtain also the triumph and enduring peace of Thy Immaculate Spouse, the well-being and prosperity of Thy Vicar on earth; to see his holy intentions fulfilled; and, at the same time, that all the clergy may more and more sanctify themselves, and be pleasing to Thee; for so many other ends, that Thou, O my Jesus, knowest to be conformed to Thy Divine Will, and that tend in any way to the conversion of sinners, and to the sanctification of the just; and that we may all obtain, one day, the eternal salvation of our souls; and because I know, O my Jesus, that I am thus doing a thing agreeable to Thy most sweet Heart:

“Prostrate at Thy feet, in presence of Mary most holy; and of all the Court of

Heaven, I solemnly acknowledge that, by every title of right and of gratitude, I belong altogether, and only, to Thee, my Redeemer Jesus Christ, the only Fountain of all my good, in my soul and in my body; and, uniting myself with the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff, I consecrate myself to Thy Most Sacred Heart—myself and all that is mine. I wish to love and to serve It alone, with all my soul, and heart, and strength; and to make Thy Will my will, uniting every desire of mine with Thine.

“And, as a public mark of this Consecration, that I make of myself and of all that is mine, I declare, solemnly to Thee, O my God, that for the time to come, in honor of Thy Sacred Heart, I will, according to the rules of the Church, observe the Festivals of precept, and obtain their observance by those over whom I have influence and authority.

“Into Thy Heart, most worthy of love, I gather all these holy desires and purposes that Thy grace has inspired. In this way I trust to render It a compensation for all the wrongs it receives from ungrateful children of men; and to forward my own good, and the good of others, for my soul, and for the souls of my Neighbors, in this life, and in the life to come.

A m e n.”

DEVOTION

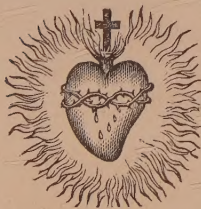
TO THE

Sacred Heart of Jesus.

BY REV. S. FRANCO, S. J.

Translated from the Italian.

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Superiorum.

SECOND REVISED EDITION.

BALTIMORE:

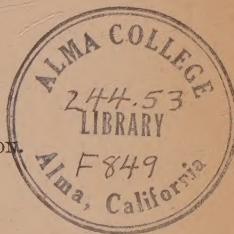
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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

TO THE SECOND REVISED EDITION.

FATHER FRANCO'S admirable treatise on the Devotion to the Sacred Heart has been read, in all the languages of Europe, by many thousands of pious Catholics. It was first given to the Catholics of this country in the pages of the *Monthly Messenger of the Sacred Heart*; and such was the favor with which it was received, that it was deemed advisable to reprint it, after revision, in book-form. The First Edition being exhausted, and the demand for the work increasing with the spread of the devotion itself, we present to the Catholic Public this Second Edition of the book, again carefully revised and greatly improved, and we trust that it will continue to meet, as it certainly deserves, the hearty welcome of all pious clients and worshippers of the Sacred Heart.

THE PUBLISHERS.

BALTIMORE, 25th Dec., 1873.

PREFACE.

IF there is one great truth plainly taught in God's most holy Word, it is that those who will be saved, must be made like unto His only begotten and beloved Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord. "Those whom the Eternal Father foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformable to the image of His Son," (*Rom.* viii. 29,) and this conformity must be manifested in this life chiefly by dying to their passions and in the patient endurance of many sufferings. This doctrine, so far above the reach of merely natural reason, and so tormenting to the wisdom of the Flesh, our Redeemer made familiar to all mankind, by the often repeated maxim: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his Cross, and follow Me," that is, in everything, as far as it is possible to human nature, let him become like unto Me, his Guide, his Saviour and his God. Through every part of that sacred volume, in whose ancient leaves the mysteries of heaven are entreaured, this doctrine runs like a vein of gold, and we have only to follow it, to become wise unto salvation, and rich unto life everlasting. To these infinite treasures of a wisdom such as only the Holy Spirit can teach, and of life eternal such as only God can impart, this little volume is designed to be a guide-book; leading us on by degrees to a more complete knowledge, love and imitation of that Sacred Heart in which are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom

and knowledge of God, and from which we can so easily draw all the grace and holiness, of which the heart of man, in its present state, is capable. From page to page this sublime object is kept in view, with a felicity of thought and language that constantly reminds us how that disciple whom Jesus loved has written, "This is eternal life, that they know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," *St. John* xvii. 3; and of that other declaration of the *Book of Wisdom*, "To know Thee is perfect justice, and to know Thy justice and Thy power is the root of immortality," xv. 3.

It was this heart-expanding wisdom that made St. Augustine exclaim: *Domine Jesu! noverim me; noverim Te, nec aliquid cupiam, nisi Te.* O Lord Jesus! may I know myself; may I know Thee; and never desire aught but Thee:—and at another moment: "*O Pulchritudo! tam nova, tam antiqua! Sero Te cognovi: sero Te amavi!*" O Beauty! ever ancient, ever new: Too late have I known Thee! Too late have I loved Thee!

Knowledge united with love is the state of the perfect in heaven. It is man's purest joy and highest dignity on earth, amid the trials of God's service; just as knowledge without love is the lot of the reprobate; the portion of those, whose tears of remorse shall flow on forever, "and flow forever, because they flow in vain."

Into the ever glorious company of the just made perfect, the study of this admirable treatise will introduce us. With far more reason, therefore, than was ever said of any secular production, ancient or modern, may we say of its almost inspired pages,

"*nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.*" "Read them by day, and study them by night."

This translation of Father Franco's work on the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is reprinted from the "*Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, a Monthly Bulletin of the Apostleship of Prayer," which we cannot recommend too earnestly to the perusal and patronage of all American Catholics. Evidently, but most unhappily, we are not conscious how greatly the future of our country depends on the living faith and zeal of the present generation. If it were written on the threshold of every Catholic home; if it were stamped in letters of light on the sky above us, it would not be more certain than it now is, that the world is passing through an ordeal, the results of which on the welfare of nations and on the progress of the Church, we do not — perhaps through our own fault — cannot at this moment conceive. As members of the Church so much the worse for us. It was so with God's chosen people, within a half century of their utter subversion. Of the strange degradation into which the nations are sinking there is no longer a doubt. The wiser heads of the secular press confess, deplore it; only the wilfully blind can fail to notice it; only the faithless, the heartless among ourselves can cease to pray, and work and struggle against it. In vain do we believe if we do not love; and worse than vain, a mockery is our love if it bring forth no fruits worthy of love; no real acts of self-denial or self-sacrifice. Take any congregation of a few hundred, or a few thousand members, and as Catholics, what and how much are we doing for the glory of God and the salvation of

souls? What sacrifices are we making to save our country? to stay the progress of error and corruption? to ward off the anarchy, we mean the disregard of all principles, of all laws, human and divine, to which we are tending? One of the best replies to these and a multitude of such questions will be to sustain the Catholic press, as for God's honor and the spread of divine truth it should be sustained: to relieve the Catholic poor, both young and aged, as we are bound to relieve them: to encourage Catholic missions both at home and abroad: in a word, to build up the House of the Lord, the Church of our God, as the very spirit and wants of the times loudly proclaim is our manifest duty. How truly has it been said of the faint encouragement given to the Catholic press of our country, "the agents of Satan are active and know no rest," while the children of the Church, the professed clients of Jesus and Mary, "often remain unconcerned about what they should consider themselves immensely honored to do." When not only in Europe, but in our own land, "some dailies, whose every page is polluting and poisoning, and killing souls, are issued at one hundred thousand, and a hundred and fifty thousand copies, why is it that the Catholic publications are so poorly supported and so scantily circulated?" When we reflect on this and similar instances of apathy where all should be love and zeal, and recall the saying of St. Charles Borromeo, that "levity of mind and love of pleasure are two great enemies of all solid virtue," how strong the temptation to believe that the Apostle's words are literally true of multitudes nominally in the Church, as they clearly

are of our modern society in general: "Know this also, that in the last days dangerous times shall come: men will be lovers of self, covetous, boastful, haughty, blasphemous, *disobedient to parents, ungrateful*, wicked, *without affection*, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, cruel, unkind, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, and *lovers of pleasure* more than of God: having indeed an appearance of piety, but denying its power. Now shun these." *Ep. 2, to Tim. c. 3.* Heaven grant that these words of the Apostle may arouse us to a sense of our duty, our danger; and break that torpor of indifference so prevalent among her sons, in this, one of the most soul-stirring epochs the Christian Church has ever seen. Oh! that two of the last great words that came from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, on the eve of the world's redemption;—a moment therefore like the present, may sink into ours; WATCH and PRAY! Thus may we have, like the faithful of the former covenant, some humble share in hastening on the advent of that longed-for day, and the accomplishment of that blessed vision of peace which even now cheers the heart of our ever-to-be-loved Chief Pastor Pius IX.: "With the firmest hope and the most perfect confidence do we trust that by the power of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church, our holy Mother, being delivered from all difficulties, and victorious over every error, will flourish throughout the whole world, and bring back all wanderers into the way of truth, that thus there shall be no longer but one Fold under the guidance of one Shepherd."

E. I. S.

INTRODUCTION BY THE AUTHOR.

THE object our Saviour had in view in coming on earth, was the salvation of all men, and He has, therefore, abundantly supplied His Church with the means adapted to that end. But in His generous providence towards us, not content with furnishing general means, He, from time to time, bestows others of a special character, according as different needs require. Thus when heresy lifted up its head, He raised up learned Doctors, who, like shining beacons, spread around them the light of truth while they dispelled error. Later on, when the unsteady and disordered state of society had caused piety to decline, He suggested new practices of devotion to renew the fervor of the faithful.

It is this that we admire in the person of a Justin, an Athenagoras, a Tertullian, who defended Christianity against the assaults of its persecutors; the same we see in the zeal of a Cyril, a Basil, an Athanasius, an Augustine, who guarded the faith against the impieties of heretics; in a Francis, a Dominic, a Vincent Ferrier, an Anthony of Padua, a Bernardine, who, by their holy preaching, recalled entire provinces and kingdoms to the fervor of Christian life. This, also, is the object of so many touching solemnities successively instituted in the Church, of

so many sanctuaries erected in all parts of the world, so many pious pilgrimages, so many devout practices. Of this there can be no doubt, since the history of the Church, from its very origin, is, so to speak, but the chronicle of such events. And, to come to our subject, the same marks of providence that distinguished the past are apparent in our day; whether it was that "where iniquity abounded grace should still more abound," or that the abyss of our wretchedness invoked an abyss of mercy, certain it is that our divine Lord has provided us with a means much more powerful than those which preceded it, and which surpasses all His former mercies. He has given to men His Sacred Heart; He has revealed the precious treasures It contains, and inviting all to enter that heavenly ark, He offers to all an assured refuge against the dangers of the times and a means to rekindle the fervor of charity.

Oh! that this Heart were known! What choice and abundant graces would it not spread over the world! But because of our tepidity, because of the vanities of life in which we remain immersed, or rather, because of the malice of the devil, who envies us so great a good, there are few who know It, fewer still who occupy themselves about It, some even who condemn It, and only a few chosen souls derive profit from It. Thus, to our other slights and ingritudes, we add that of refusing the healing balm that Jesus offers to pour on our wounds, and the remedy He has prepared for our weakness.

Thoughts like these affected me so painfully that I conceived the desire of contributing my mite towards the relief of such disorders, and to spread the knowledge of the Sacred Heart as far as lay in me. At first, I contemplated a new edition of one of the many works piety has produced on this subject, but the reading required to make a selection, led me to adopt another plan. The greater part of these books, especially those written towards the close of the last century, a time when this devotion still met with much opposition, are naturally taken up with refutations and answers to objections; others aim principally at proposing practices of piety and prayers in honor of the Sacred Heart, considering the nature of the devotion as already sufficiently well known; a few undertake to explain in what it consists, but these seem to me not to give it as wide a range as it should have. I, therefore, thought that a new book would not be out of place, which, leaving aside controversies which the decision of the Church has made useless, would give a correct idea of the devotion, its advantages and prerogatives, so that, having a clear understanding of it, all might feel impelled to embrace it with ardor. Such is the object of the following pages, which I propose to pursue as follows:

I shall first endeavor to bring out, in its full light, the essence of this devotion, by going over the elements which compose it. Next, considering these elements separately, we shall study the dignity and

excellence of each, and then conclude, if possible, to the greatness of the object which combines all these elements in itself. Then, as our Lord bids us judge the tree by its fruits, we shall examine the effects which the devotion to the Sacred Heart produces, the better to penetrate its worth and holiness. Lastly, I will indicate the most practical manner of honoring this divine Heart. This is a field which appears to me as yet unoccupied, and one which will yield an abundant harvest to any one who will bestow his labors upon it.

If a slender vein on the surface of an otherwise barren rock sometimes suffices to lead to the discovery of a rich mine, who knows but the perusal of this little work may suffice to awaken in some or other soul the suspicion that the devotion we endeavor to sketch contains a hidden treasure, a suspicion which will lead to a search that will be crowned with success. This is my desire, and above all, this I hope for from the goodness of the Sacred Heart, which, eager to be known and loved by men, will not fail to bless my feeble effort and cause it to attain, at least in part, the object I have in view. At all events, it will remain a pledge of the gratitude I have vowed for the numberless favors It has bestowed upon me; it will serve to nourish my confidence of ever living in this Sacred Heart, and finally dying in Its love: this is the wish I express for myself, and for all who may read these pages.

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DEVOTION

To the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

CHAPTER I.

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus — Its Origin —
Material and Spiritual Object — Its Special End — The
Facility with which it may be Practised and Propagated.

REASON and experience convince us that we cannot value that of which we know nothing, nor can any praises bestowed by others on an object truly worthy of love enkindle in our heart that love for it which is only to be produced by our own intimate knowledge of the object itself. It is precisely this want of exact knowledge which has occasioned so many errors in the minds of men in regard to the nature of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus — causing some to look upon it as a mere shift for feeding an unsubstantial piety; others to regard it as a devotion fit only for the cloister; others again to give it (without condemning it altogether) a place far below what it deserves. It is the object of these pages to correct all false impressions, and to set the Devotion in its true

light, with the claims it has upon our esteem and affection, and upon our zeal in making it known to others. May God grant us the light and grace to discover the whole value of this inestimable treasure! Thenceforth, our most profound regret will be that, having always had it in our power to enjoy its advantages, we remained so long impoverished from our negligence in availing ourselves of the benefits it could have conferred on us.

1. There lived in the Convent of the Visitation, at Paray-le-Monial, in France, a pious nun named Margaret Mary Alacoque. From her earliest youth she had enjoyed special favors from God, and had corresponded with them most faithfully — He, on the one side, filling her soul with extraordinary graces and raising her up to a sublime contemplation; she, on the other, reciprocating by the constant practice of the most heroic virtues, and dedicating herself to God, even from her seventh year, by a vow of perpetual virginity. This rare flower our Lord took care to transfer from the arid soil of the world to the rich garden of the cloister, that under His special care it might grow and develop into perfect beauty. And well did she justify the favor bestowed upon her by her Divine Spouse. Her progress was something wonderful. From the

first, she exercised the most profound humility; content with God alone, she aspired to be by all others only forgotten and trampled under foot; detached, with her whole heart, from earthly things, she aspired to those of heaven alone. Practising the most exact obedience, she renounced entirely her own will and embraced that of God alone, as manifested to her by her superiors. So penetrated and inflamed was she by divine love, that she became, as it were, a victim and a holocaust before her Lord. Her love for God was equalled only by her contempt for herself and for all that was of the world, and she mortified and crucified her innocent flesh to the utmost extent permitted her by her superiors. In fine, there was observable in her a wonderful patience and resignation under all the trials which it was her lot to sustain for the love of God.

It was this soul, so pure, that God made choice of to establish the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and in the following manner: One day, during the octave of Corpus Christi, while she was engaged in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus Christ, her Beloved, suddenly appeared before her, and, opening His breast, showed her His Heart. This divine Heart, enthroned, as it were, in flames, was surrounded by a crown of thorns,

and the wound It had received was still open, while a cross, more brilliant than the sun, surmounted all. After permitting His servant to contemplate this spectacle for a time in silence, our Lord uttered these loving words: "Behold this Heart, which so loves men as to spare itself in nothing—even exhausting itself and being consumed for the love of them. Yet, in return, I receive from the greater number only ingratitude, through the coldness and contempt they exhibit for me in the Sacrament of my love, or through the irreverences and sacrileges of which they are guilty; and what wounds me more than all else is, that I am thus treated by hearts which are consecrated to me. It is my desire, therefore, that the first Friday after the octave of the Blessed Sacrament, (Corpus Christi,) be observed in a special manner as the Feast of my Heart, by offering a Communion, with a reparation of honor for all the insults and indignities which It has received since the institution of the Sacrament of the Altar. I promise that my Heart shall bestow its love abundantly on those who will render me this honor, or cause the same to be rendered me by others."

The emotions of the servant of God on hearing these words may be more readily imagined than

described. When sufficiently recovered from her surprise, she replied: "But, my Lord, to whom dost thou address thyself! To a creature so base, a sinner so wretched that her unworthiness is of itself sufficient to hinder the accomplishment of thy design! Hast thou not other souls generous enough to be entrusted with such a duty?" "What!" replied our Lord, "do you not know that I make use of the weak to confound the strong, and that it is through the insignificant and the humble in spirit that I ordinarily cause my power to be displayed with the greatest lustre, since they can attribute nothing of it to themselves?"

Such was the revelation from which the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus took its rise. But the divine Master did not limit to this occasion only the instructions His servant was to receive on this important subject. He made her known to another of His faithful servants, Father de la Colombière, who, after examining and proving the spirit that animated her, was to aid her in establishing and propagating the devotion. In subsequent communications, our Lord displayed to her the profound secrets and ineffable mysteries of His divine Heart; He made her understand the end which generous souls, who aspire to glorify

His Heart, should propose to themselves; He Himself indicated the pious practices which, to this end, He desired to see appointed, and suggested the affections with which they should be inspired. He enumerated the many favors with which He would enrich His adorers, in view of the requirements of each one's state of life; He announced that His glory would be enhanced even through the contradictions which would arise to oppose this devotion; and, finally, in fulfilment of a promise made her, He permitted her even to realize during her own lifetime that this same devotion to the Sacred Heart, practised as we now practise it, was truly His own work.

2. After this short review of the origin of the devotion, let us proceed to consider in what the devotion consists. In general, it would be well to call to mind that nearly every devotion practised in the Church has a twofold aspect—the one, material and visible, giving a title to the devotion; the other, spiritual and invisible, which is the implicit object of the devotion. In each aspect, the devotion ought to be holy in itself and tend to the glory of God, whether God be the direct object, or whether, on the other hand, we seek to glorify Him through His saints. It is thus that, in the devotion to the Five Wounds of our Lord, His

wounded hands, feet, and side, are the *exterior* objects of our devotion, and give to the devotion its title; but it is the ardent love which caused Him to suffer for us, which is the *invisible and spiritual* object of our affections. In like manner, in the honors rendered by the Church to the instruments of the Passion, (as witness the offices of the Spear, the Crown of Thorns, the Nails, etc.,) the material object is found in these exterior things sanctified by their connection with our divine Saviour; the spiritual and invisible object is the realization to ourselves of the ardent love with which He submitted to so many torments for our sake. This may be applied to all other festivals instituted by the Church to honor, under an exterior object, the virtues, the actions, the mysteries of our Saviour's life, or of that of His holy Mother or of His Saints.

Now, what is found in all these devotions, approved by the Church, is found no less in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which also has its twofold aspect. The exterior and visible object is that Heart as it exists in the Person of the divine Word, united to the most sacred Soul which vivifies it. The spiritual and invisible object is clearly signified to us by the representation, now happily so familiar to us, which, with the

symbols accompanying it, affords us a realization of the ardent, the all-enduring love of Jesus. Is there, in the devotion as thus described, anything which is not perfectly simple and easy of comprehension? Or, can it be just to allege, as some do, that we thus "divide" Jesus Christ, contrary to the admonition of the Apostle of the Gentiles? When we extol the voice of an able singer, the hand of a skilful artist, do we *divide* the persons so commended? By no means. We regard in a special manner, it is true, the quality we speak of, but the credit redounds to the entire personality of the individual of whom the quality is predicated. As the quality noticed has no existence independently of the individual to whom it is attached, it is impossible to separate one from the other, any more than in considering a tree we can make an abstraction of the branches, or of the trunk, as something totally distinct from the tree itself. In this sense only is the Sacred Heart of Jesus put forward as the material object in the devotion under consideration.

Let us now study the devotion in its ulterior aim. I contend that we need be at no loss to comprehend the spiritual and invisible object embraced therein, and even that it is not possible to mistake it. As the heart of a man represents to us, in our

way of speaking, his sentiments, his virtues, his good qualities, his whole interior, so the adorable Heart of Jesus is a representation of all that is ineffable in the Godhead to which it is united — the treasures of grace, the heavenly virtues, the ardent charity of the Son of God. It symbolizes His whole interior, with its thoughts and acts — His patience, His humility, His zeal, His meekness, all His virtues. It is, in our eyes, the source of all the spiritual goods we receive, the seat of those lofty desires entertained in regard to us, and of the hidden motives which prompt these desires. We figure to ourselves, as dwelling therein, all that affability, love, and heavenly tenderness which accompany His benefits and characterize His whole conduct in our regard. Moreover, through the inseparable union which exists between the Sacred Heart and the Person of the divine Word, by virtue of which it is the Heart of God, all these qualities of the Sacred Heart lay claim to our special veneration and respect. Thus, that Heart,* and the love of which it is the source, remind us of each other. Wonderful invention of the Divine Wisdom! Jesus perceives the coldness felt towards Himself by mankind, and beholds that fire extinguished in the hearts of His creatures which

*See note at the end of the book.

He came upon earth to spread everywhere; and, because the charity of many has grown cold, as He Himself predicted it would, (*Matt.* xxiv. 12,) multitudes are precipitated into eternal ruin. He has set Himself to banish this coldness, to rekindle the fire of His love, to recall to the path of life and salvation the souls that were perishing for the lack of this love. To compass these ends, He presents to us His Heart, and presents it under such a form, that to withhold our love is impossible. The mysteries of His life, and especially the sufferings He endured in His Passion and death, and the humiliations to which He descends in order to conceal Himself in the Sacrament of the Altar, to leave us a perpetual memorial of Himself, and constantly renew the Sacrifice of the Cross, have ever proved most copious sources of devotion, and will never cease to be so. Now, all this is distinctly brought before us, as food for loving contemplation, in the devotion which has for its object the veneration of the Heart of Jesus.

The contemplation of this Heart cannot, indeed, but awaken in us a sense of the love which Jesus bears us, and inspire us with that we owe Him in return. Beholding that Heart so cruelly pierced, we recall the multitude of benefits which have thence flowed out upon us, and the refuge it affords

us in our needs. Beholding it surrounded by its thorny crown and with the cross set above it, we comprehend at a glance the source of our Lord's desire of suffering, and the motives which animated that desire. The whole image is suggestive of the Sacrament of Love, the Blessed Eucharist, that epitome of God's favors to man.

That it is in this manner we are to view the two-fold object embraced in the devotion to the Sacred Heart, which is the light, moreover, in which the Church regards it, is clearly enough conveyed in the revelation made to the Blessed Margaret Mary: "My divine Master assured me," says this illustrious servant of God, "that He received, with singular satisfaction, the honors rendered to the love and the interior affections of His Heart as represented under the figure in which He had shown it to me." Elsewhere she says, in reference to the symbols accompanying the representation: "He gave me to understand that these instruments of His passion signified that it was the intense love of His Heart for men which had been the source of all His sufferings; that from the first instant of His incarnation, these torments had always been present to His mind, and that the cross was thenceforth, as it were, planted in His Heart; from that moment He accepted all the pains he was to en-

ture in His sacred Humanity throughout the term of His mortal life, as also all the outrages to which He would be exposed, to the end of time, through His love for men, by remaining with them in the Blessed Sacrament." At another time, Jesus said to her: "Behold this Heart, which has so loved men as to spare nothing in order to gain their love, yet which has suffered more from their ingratitude than from the torments of the Passion." And again: "Behold this Heart, which has suffered so many sorrows, torments, and humiliations, yet which yearns to pour out treasures of grace and of love on those who shall love it and procure for it all possible love from others."

The Church herself, as intimated above, keeps before us this twofold aspect of the devotion — on the one hand, the Heart of Jesus, as it exists in the Person of the Word made flesh, united with His Soul; on the other, its grandeurs and its gifts, its marvellous treasures of grace, in short, all those virtues and affections of which the heart is the recognized image and symbol. In her office for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, she styles it: "Heart, immaculate Sanctuary of the new covenant, — Temple, in sanctity superior to the temple of old, — Veil, more precious (*utilius*) than that which was rent asunder." To these expressions, which

apply to the Heart as a material object, she adds, from the words of St. Bernard, others suggestive of the spiritual object of the devotion: "Charity causes the lance to pierce thee with a visible wound, in order that the wounds of an invisible love may be made apparent, and receive our veneration." (Hymn at Lauds.) The same sense is still more succinctly conveyed in the prayer or collect for the Feast: "Glorying in the most Sacred Heart of thy beloved Son, we recall the chief benefits we have received from His love." In the Lessons of the Breviary, she subjoins for our instruction: "The Sovereign Pontiff, Clement XIII., has authorized the celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, in order that the faithful may, by means of this symbol of His Heart, more fervently and devoutly adore the charity of Jesus Christ suffering and dying for the redemption of the human race, and, in commemoration of His death, instituting the Sacrament of His Body and Blood." As he who honors the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, renders honor to the love which caused Him to endure them,—as he who venerates the sacred wood of the cross, does honor to the Saviour who sanctified it by expiring thereon: so, he who honors the Sacred Heart of Jesus, under the symbol presented to us by the Church, renders honor

and glory to Jesus loving, Jesus dying, Jesus hidden in the Holy Eucharist. It would be difficult, indeed, to know which to admire most, the simplicity of the means which God has made choice of to re-animate our love towards His divine Son, the wisdom with which this means has been appointed to the desired end, or the sublimity and excellence of a devotion directed towards an object so noble and exalted.

3. From the explanations now given of this devotion, it will be readily understood that its main object is to teach us how to love, (the love of love, says St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi,) and to love that which is the most lovable of all objects, the Heart of a Redeemer. True love, says St. Bernard, is content only with loving. Love suffices to itself; love is its own reward. Now, the special desire of our Lord is, that souls devoted to the Sacred Heart should, in this spirit of devoted love, recompense Him for the ingratitude with which He is overwhelmed in the Holy Eucharist. In proof of this desire, we repeat, in part, the substance of the communication to Blessed Margaret Mary, which we have already referred to: "Behold this Heart which has so loved men. . . . In return, I receive from the greater number only ingratitude, through the irreverences and sacri-

leges, the coldness and contempt they exhibit towards me in the Sacrament of my Love. Therefore, I desire that the first Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi be dedicated as a special Feast in honor of my Heart, that the faithful communicate on that day, and offer a reparation of honor for all the indignities offered to me while exposed on the altars." The great desire He had that this special intention should always be kept in view, He manifested to His devout servant on other occasions, eliciting from her, at the same time, most fervent acts of reparation for the outrages of which He complained. The Holy Eucharist, being the crowning pledge of our Lord's love for us, ingratitude towards it must indeed occasion His Heart the keenest pangs, while, on the other hand, that Heart must feel deeply consoled by the efforts we make to offer reparation for these injuries.

4. We believe that no apprehension need arise of difficulty in the practice of this devotion. The most simple and uninstructed Christian, having before his eyes the representation of Jesus Christ, with His Heart surrounded by flames, cannot fail to understand that this image is designed to raise his thoughts to the consideration of our Lord's infinite love. And is not this the whole aim of the devotion to the Sacred Heart? The material

object, the Heart of Jesus, is presented to us in order that it may carry us on to the spiritual and invisible object, the ardent charity with which that Heart is inflamed. The extent to which this design is, among individuals, really fulfilled, no one of them can well measure for himself or render an account of to others. But what will it matter, provided this tribute to the Sacred Heart be at least rendered; provided Jesus reaps the glory He expects; provided they themselves gather the fruits He has promised to the clients of His Sacred Heart? Were an ordinary person to view a painting of Raphael's, he might not discover all the beauties that would be apparent to a *connoisseur*; but will he, therefore, misconceive the subject, or take a king for a peasant, or a man for an inferior animal? By no means; he sees what the other sees, the difference being only in the degree of appreciation. So with the Sacred Heart. None can fail to comprehend in what the devotion consists, if they cannot fail to understand its pictured symbol; but those who would avail themselves, to the fullest extent, of all the blessings it is capable of bestowing, should study it under all points, and make themselves familiar, through their own actual experience, with the treasures it comprehends.

Above all, those who are, by profession, devoted

to the salvation of souls, should strive to penetrate its spirit. In their meditations, they should draw abundantly from this source of inspiration, intoxicating themselves, as it were, with the wine of divine love. Then let them go forth, filled with holy zeal, and kindle in other hearts the fire that burns in their own. Let them extol everywhere the titles which the Sacred Heart of Jesus has to the love of Christians,—the graces, the gifts, the perfections which enrich it,—the incalculable benefits it has bestowed, and especially, the infinite love with which it is filled for the children of men! Let them make known all this to the people, and they shall soon see the empire of love embrace all hearts, and the simple image of the Sacred Heart become the source of the most tender and exalted piety. “I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to the little ones.” (*Luke* x. 11.)



CHAPTER II.

EXCELLENCE OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS, IN VIEW OF ITS ORIGIN.

Jesus Christ Himself the Author of it — The Church Proposes it — She Invites us to Practise it — Praises Bestowed on it by the Fathers — The Devotion of the Saints to the Sacred Heart.

WE have shown in what the devotion to the Sacred Heart consists. These explanations were necessary, in order that a just idea might be formed concerning it, and that no one might allege against it what is inconsistent with it. But, to embrace the devotion with fervor, our conception of it should be so sublime, and it should appear to us under so noble and pleasing an aspect, as wholly to attract us to it. This result can be obtained by the exposition of the causes which lie at the basis of the devotion. Four causes ordinarily concur to the production of any work — the person engaged in it — the object which supplies the matter — the form to be given to the work — and finally the end aimed at by it. By carefully weighing these, we gain not only a correct idea of the nature of any work whatsoever, but learn the full extent of its excellence. We

shall commence with the first, and see what the Devotion to the Sacred Heart is in its origin.

1. Were we to see a great prince betake himself to his garden and plant there with his own hands a tender sapling; were we to see him greatly interested in its welfare, watering, pruning, cultivating it, should we not conclude that he had a most affectionate regard for this sapling? Undoubtedly. If, then, in the mystical garden of the Church, where flourish all trees which bear fruits of eternal life, we see Jesus Christ, the divine gardener, plant one Himself, and cultivate, strengthen and protect it in a remarkable manner, must we not infer that He has a special predilection for it? Most assuredly. Now, this is precisely what has happened in regard to the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Our Lord, in almost every age, and especially in times of great distress, has granted new succors to His Church; sometimes by means of apostolic men, whose burning words strengthened the faith of timid souls and aroused new fervor in the tepid; sometimes by a pious practice, which led back to a sense of duty, and to the exercise of Christian virtue, souls who were languid and had wandered from the right path. But is there, indeed, a case in which He has done this *in person*, revealing the object which He

wished to see honored, and the manner in which this honor was to be given, indicating the fruits of the devotion proposed, explaining in detail its advantages, exhorting all to have recourse to it, and, finally, soliciting, in the most persuasive manner, all hearts to embrace it with great confidence? That He has deigned to act thus in regard to His divine Heart, may be easily established from the many revelations with which He favored His faithful servant, Blessed Margaret Mary.

Jesus appeared suddenly to her, when she least expected such a presence, and opening to her the inexhaustible treasures of mercy in His divine Heart, bade her partake of them abundantly. It was Jesus that sent to her, first, Father La Colombière to assist in making known the devotion, and successively many other co-laborers in this great undertaking. It was Jesus that then thwarted the opposition raised by ignorance and passion. It was Jesus that taught her how to honor His Sacred Heart by practices and acts more and more elevated. It was Jesus that drew to the devotion persons of every state of life, ecclesiastics and religious, the young and the old, the married and the single, promising to each the graces proper to his state of life. Now, considering that the divine Word, the uncreated Wisdom, who orders all

things *in measure, in number and weight*, (*Wis. xi. 21.*) has formed this design, and chosen it as a means of saving souls and restoring His own glory, should we not hold it in high esteem? Jesus Christ Himself is pleased to open His Heart to His faithful servants and invite them to partake of its infinite treasures; and shall not these chosen ones attach an infinite value to such a gift, offered by such a hand? Could He have acted in this matter without the guidance of infinite Wisdom? Could He have granted us such a favor without being actuated by infinite charity? If a great prince of the earth should condescend so far as to heap favors upon us, and extend us a helping hand, this alone would suffice to fill us with gratitude and love; our loving Jesus condescends to offer us His own Heart; and shall we not receive it with eagerness and cherish it with love?

2. Some may object to the devotion because it is founded upon private revelations, and consequently, they say, the faithful cannot have that undoubted certainty which should be the basis of Christian piety. I propose this difficulty, which, if unexplained, might chill devotion at its source; because, by its solution, I hope to strengthen the grounds on which the devotion rests. It must be borne in mind that the occasion which gave rise to

the devotion is one thing, and the foundation of our certainty in regard to the holiness, the excellence, the dignity of the object presented to our adoration, is another. A private revelation, it is true, gave origin to the devotion ; but its approval is due to the Church, on whose infallible authority we receive it. Therefore, though the sanctity of the humble virgin be well known from the process of her beatification, and the decree passed upon her virtues, from the judgment of doctors of divinity, and on the authority of bishops who approved her life and writings ; still, since the faithful are not to be guided by the private judgments even of Saints, this devotion rests its claim, not upon the authority of the Blessed Margaret Mary, but upon that of the Church. And, as the Church is not subject to error, she cannot propose anything to us which is not contained in the deposit of truth.

A very meagre acquaintance with the annals of the Church suffices to show us that this is not the first time a private revelation has given rise to a new solemnity. A private revelation originated the feasts of the Finding and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross ; a private revelation caused the feasts of the Rosary and of the Scapular to be appointed ; a private revelation was the origin of the feast of the Apparition of St. Michael ; and, to omit many

others, a private revelation made to a holy virgin, the Blessed Juliana of Mount Cornillon, near Liege, gave rise to the great Solemnity of Corpus Christi, celebrated with so much pomp throughout the Christian world. After these several revelations were submitted to the judgment of the Church, the Mother and Teacher of truth, and had met with her solemn approval, the faithful, in virtue of this approbation, accepted them with entire security. The same has happened in the present case. The Heart which Jesus presented to His faithful servant as a new token of His love, the Church in turn presents to us. She presents it to us with the Cross which is implanted there, with the thorns, the wound ; she presents it, surrounded by flames, and, in all respects, just as it was revealed to the humble virgin. Aware, then, that the Church, the immovable rock of truth, is thus our guarantee for the devotion, we have no fear of becoming the victims of false revelations, nor of practising an indiscreet devotion, nor of being carried away by delusions.

3. But I have said too little, in insisting that the Church is our guarantee for the solidity of this devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. She does more : she has continually exerted her power in its favor. She has neglected nothing that could tend

to its propagation. Scarcely had it become known beyond the humble place of its origin, when the Church summoned it to her august tribunal, and after an examination and discussion which were regulated by heavenly prudence, decided that the devotion was just and holy. From that moment, she has not ceased to inculcate, defend, and exalt it in a thousand ways; she has established the feast of the Sacred Heart; she has prescribed the Mass and composed the office; she has made known in her liturgy the character and nature of the devotion. Many, from passion or ignorance, strangely misrepresented, or unworthily combatted it. The conventicle of Pistoia, with an arrogance truly deplorable, went so far as to disparage and despise it.* But the Church, in virtue of her authority, instructed the ignorant, condemned the

* I must not omit in this place to do justice to the clergy of Pistoia. If, on account of the troubles of the times, they could not prohibit the conventicle from holding its sessions in their city, they, at least, with the exception of a few ecclesiastics who were deceived by the strangers assembled there, were averse to its impious doctrines, and entirely rejected them. And, in our own days, the devotion to the Sacred Heart is so highly esteemed in that diocese, that there is not another in Italy where it is better practised, or where more zeal is shown in the promotion of the glory and love of the divine Heart.

impious, and caused that honor to be rendered to the Sacred Heart which is its due.

The faithful expressed a desire to form associations, in order to render homage to this divine Heart; and the Church instituted immediately numerous confraternities, which, in a short time, were spread over the world. What shall I say of the treasures of indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs to the confraternities founded in its honor, as well as to the faithful who strove to glorify it by certain fixed practices? These indulgences are innumerable, and apply to almost every day in the year.

In addition to the interest manifested by the Supreme Pontiffs, the eagerness with which the devotion was welcomed by the bishops of all Christendom is marvellous. "This feast," as the Acts of the Congregation of Rites (A. D. 1727) inform us, "is asked for, not by one church only, or one province, but by a multitude of churches, scattered over the whole world; it is petitioned for, not by one or two bishops, but in a hundred and more of the principal sees of France, Germany, Belgium, and Poland."

In the footsteps of the bishops followed the clergy, both regular and secular. The religious orders rivalled one another in zeal for its introduc-

tion into their churches, and in extending the honor and veneration paid to the Heart of Jesus. Among the secular clergy, those most zealous for the salvation of souls, introduced the devotion into their parishes; and in some dioceses there is not a single church that does not possess at least one altar consecrated to the Sacred Heart.

As to the faithful in general, observation reveals two facts worthy of our attention; one is, that the more profoundly they are penetrated with the spirit of piety, the deeper is their affection for the Sacred Heart; the other, that whenever the devotion is announced as the subject of a discourse, they flock in crowds to hear it and discover, by unmistakable signs, the emotion to which the subject gives rise. He who, in all this, fails to see the spirit of the Church, is capable of denying that the sun is in the heavens at mid-day.

4. Ought there, indeed, to be anything surprising in the fact that Jesus, in these latter days, desires special honor to be paid to His divine Heart? Although He had not heretofore made it the object of a particular worship in His Church, there was no time when this adorable object was entirely unrecognized. Whilst contemplating it upon the Cross, pierced by the lance, and open to receive all, the faithful most illumined by light from on

high, and most fervent in love, discovered in it great and consoling mysteries. St. Augustine, rapt in admiration before the Heart of Jesus pierced upon the cross, saw the Church proceed thence all radiant with beauty. "Our divine Spouse," says he, "reclines on His bed of the Cross; He reposes in the sleep of death, and from His transpierced Heart proceeds the virgin Church. And in the same way that Eve was formed from the side of Adam whilst sleeping, so the Church proceeded from the side of Jesus on the cross." The Martyr, St. Cyprian, (or the author, whoever he be, of the little work, *De Montibus Sion et Sina*,) has the same sentiment: "The Heart of Jesus being pierced, there flowed thence blood and water, of which the holy Church was formed." But how can this be? In what sense can it be said that the Church came forth from the Heart of Jesus? The holy Fathers, with unanimous voice, furnish the reply. It is because all the Sacraments of the Church come forth from this Heart. The water indicates Baptism, which is the gate and entrance of the Church, and the blood, the Holy Eucharist, which is the end and consummation of all the others, and, therefore, with these two Sacraments, are comprised all.

"From Thy side," exclaims Arnold of Chartres,

in holy colloquy with Jesus, "from Thy side spring forth the fountains of life everlasting. Thence issue, not only the waters of the first ablution, which bring us to Thee by baptism, but furthermore, perennial rivers of tears, whence we draw compunction, together with the fruits of heavenly mercies and of divine goodness." Tertullian assigns another reason: "because in this Heart are placed our vocation and election to salvation, since he who has faith in the blood, is purified by the water, and he who is purified by the water, drinks of the blood." St. Cyril finds in this wound of the Heart the accomplishment of the redemption, since it is the most evident proof of the death of the Saviour.

With what transports of holy joy have not the Saints delighted to dwell in this impregnable fortress of love! Some recognize in this wound of the Heart a proof of the most passionate love of Jesus for men, since it strikes to the very centre of love. Others, instance His generous love in shedding thence the last drop of His blood. Yes, Jesus gave Himself wholly to us during life: He wishes to give Himself wholly to us after death; and His wounded Heart is the last pledge of His constant love for us, the remedy for the mortal wounds of our own. In a word, the Fathers by revealing the

sublime mysteries, the profound secrets, that lay hidden in the Heart of Jesus, showed clearly the high appreciation in which they held it, and thus paved the way for the more special devotion which it has pleased our Saviour to establish in the Church in our days. Before the sun illumines the plains and valleys with its rays, it gilds the mountain-tops and shines upon the pinnacles of lofty towers; so this most loving Heart, before shedding its light over the whole world, gave token, in some sublime souls, of the light that was to be diffused among men.

5. More than this, by a holy impatience on the part of our God, Who desires with an infinite desire to communicate Himself to His creatures, and to place no bounds to the graces He lavishes upon them, He permitted some souls even then to enjoy the special graces we now experience from this devotion. Thus early, He seemed to be unable to withhold the superabundance of the treasures which His Heart contained. Who can deny to St. Augustine, for one, an intimate knowledge of this amiable Heart, when he exclaims, in a transport of love: "Longinus with his lance has opened for me the Heart of Jesus; I have entered into it, and there repose secure." He must truly have tasted the sweetness of this Heart, to speak in this manner.

It is certain that St. Bernard had known it long before he exclaimed: "Oh, how good and how happy a thing it is to dwell in this Heart!" Or, when in an ecstasy of fervor, he cried out: "Who would not cherish this Heart so sorely wounded? Who would not love a Heart so loving, embrace a Heart so chaste?" How warmly did the pious Lanspergius wish it loved, when he said: "How sweet it is to enter and abide in this Heart!" And the sublime Tauler, how much must he have desired it to be known, when, describing the chaste delights of a soul abiding in this Heart and the end Jesus proposed to Himself in presenting it to us, he says: "He has given us His Heart cruelly wounded, that we may dwell there until, purified from all the stains of sin and rendered conformable to Him, we may be made worthy to be introduced with Him into the divine Heart of the Eternal Father."

These are truths which could never have penetrated so deeply, had not the divine Master Himself manifested them in the secret inspirations of prayer. Again, Jesus revealed the hidden treasures of His Heart to St. Catharine of Sienna, whom He deemed worthy of receiving this adorable Heart in exchange for her own. He revealed them to the Blessed Jane of Valois, to whom He

presented His own Heart, together with that of His most Holy Mother. The hidden treasures of this Heart were not unknown to St. Francis of Sales, the spiritual father of that great soul who afterwards spread the knowledge of it over the whole world. He was accustomed to designate it as the sanctuary of those who wished to form a union of prayers with himself. As to St. Gertrude, the intimacy she enjoyed with the Sacred Heart, the prayers she offered up to it, the vows and homages with which she worshipped it, were something almost beyond belief. Jesus drew her into this living temple of grace; He inebriated her with holy delights, and thence inspired her with the most precious virtues. The ardent love of St. Aloysius Gonzaga for the Heart of the divine Saviour might have remained unknown to us, had not a holy virgin, St. Magdalen of Pazzi, revealed it in an ecstasy. She saw in spirit the sublime degree of glory to which this angel of innocence was raised, and made known the cause of it by saying that *Aloysius during his mortal life cast darts of fire into the Heart of the Word, and now these darts are gathered into his own.*

I pass over in silence what might be said of St. Teresa, St. Mechtildis, St. Frances of Rome, St. Peter of Alcantara, the Blessed Angela of Fo-

ligno, the Venerable Mother Agreda, and many other souls, whom we cannot doubt Jesus made participants of the secrets of His divine Heart, when we consider the veneration they paid it, and the graces they received from it. From all that has been said, the conclusion is apparent, that real as these graces were, we cannot sufficiently thank our Lord for having, by means of His Church, deigned to place at the disposal of all, treasures which He communicated formerly only to a few privileged souls.



CHAPTER III.

EXCELLENCE OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS, ON ACCOUNT OF THE MATERIAL
OBJECT WHICH IS HONORED.

The Heart of Jesus compared with other objects of Devotion
— The Heart of Jesus considered in itself, in its moral life,
and in the person of the Word — The Heart of Jesus con-
sidered as a victim, and as our nourishment.

A LOVING spouse is not content with a great esteem for her beloved; she extends her affection to everything that belongs to him. So the Church, the most affectionate spouse of the Saviour, does not confine herself to the glorifying of His person in general; she extends her veneration to all His actions in particular, to all His benefits, to all the titles that He has to our love. How could she, then, neglect the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the object of so much love, the source of so many graces, the earnest of so many hopes, the fulfilment of so many mysteries? She offers it to our homage, as we have seen, as the living symbol of the other grandeurs of our divine Saviour.

Let us then see what excellence attends this veneration, of which we speak, on account of the

end it has in view, that this knowledge may excite in us the desire of never losing sight of it.

1. Were we to propose, in this devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, only the veneration of His visible Heart, pierced by the lance, that would of itself be an object of immense importance; for, is it not the most noble part of the body of Christ? Did He not there experience in a most lively manner the interior torments of His soul? Was not this Heart the last target against which was hurled the malice of men? The Church honors with a special devotion each instrument of the passion of the Saviour, and she has instituted feasts and offices, in order that the memory of them may be celebrated with becoming solemnity. She has acted thus in regard to the crown of thorns, the lance, the nails, the cross. Illustrious Churches are proud of possessing a thorn of the holy crown, and the Subalpine people glory in having the holy shroud. We all know what imposing ceremonies, what endearing expressions the Church uses in Holy Week, to honor the cross of the Saviour. But what claim have all these objects, so dear to our faith, on our veneration? They have been sanctified by contact with our divine Redeemer, have wounded His body, torn His sacred flesh, been dyed in His precious blood. These are the

titles they have to our homage; titles in very truth of the highest moment; titles above all exception; for, indeed, if the world treasures up with respect the sword of a great captain, the mightier pen of a great genius; with what tender regard should it not cherish the objects connected with our divine Saviour, by reason of such sweet and endearing reminiscences? Despite all this, what comparison is there between the body itself and the sanctified objects, consecrated by contact with it? What comparison between these objects and the adorable Heart, formed of the most pure blood of the Virgin Mother, and chosen to be the means of the life of a Man-God?

We venerate with tender affection the relics of those unconquerable champions of the faith, who have illustrated it by their deeds and sufferings. The faithful come in crowds to prostrate themselves devoutly at the tombs of the Saints; Christian piety erects majestic temples in their honor, adorns their altars and dedicates to them magnificent shrines, consecrates to their veneration all that is precious. The Church herself allows the Holy Mysteries to be celebrated only upon their venerated relics. And why all this? Because these relics are the loved remains of those bodies, in which the Holy Ghost once dwelt, penetrated

with His unction and sanctified by His grace. But what shall be said of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Who will dare to institute a comparison between it and these objects? Shall not this Heart elicit the whole effusion of Christian piety?

Again, is there a faithful soul that does not honor and cherish the holy Name of Jesus, that Name, at which "every knee shall bend of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth;" that Name which was the sweetness of honey to St. Bernard's tongue, delightful melody to his ears, untold joy to his heart; that Name which St. Bernardin used as a sword of triumph to gain sinners, an allurements to attract them, a light to enlighten them, an unction to move them? And in comparison even with this august Name, is not the venerated image of the Sacred Heart more endearing? Does it not offer a far more tangible object to our piety, and arouse more ardent and affectionate sentiments?

2. This Heart, however, not considering it is a material object, has other titles to our love. But to form a correct idea of them, we must look higher and see what the adorable Heart is, whether regarded in its moral life, or in the divine person with which it is united.

It must be admitted that the sacred Body of

Jesus, physically considered, is the perfection of all bodies; it was, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, formed of the most pure blood of a Virgin of unexampled purity; it is beautiful with heavenly beauty; it is the companion of the most perfect soul that ever came from the hands of the Almighty. And yet this is only its least merit.

The Body possesses a moral life, which is common to it with the soul, in so much as it participates in the actions which the soul commands and directs. The body is wearied by fatigue, weakened by fasting, prostrated in prayer, wasted by penance, exhausted by zealous labors; the body is subject to heat and cold, yields to sickness, and dies. God, in His loving Providence, has decreed that the body, the faithful companion of the soul in good works, shall not be deprived of beatitude, according to its nature and capacity. *The body, says the Apostle, is sown in weakness, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory.* What title, then, has the Sacred Body of Christ to our gratitude! He was in labors from His youth; He passed His infancy and youth in the enduring toils of a laborious occupation, in the privations of an indigent life, in the hardships of persecution, in flight and exile, subject to all the inconveniences of poverty. He began His divine mis-

sion, and we saw Him wearied by long journeys, tormented by hunger, without a shelter to which He could withdraw and where He could lay His Head, passing the night in watching and praying. Finally, His passion came, like a stormy sea, and engulfed Him in its depths. The share His adorable Body had in these events is more easily meditated on in silence than expressed in words. There was no part of His divine Body which did not undergo a special torment, so that with justice we may apply to it the words spoken by the prophet : *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein.* (Is. i. 6.) His brow is encircled by a heavy crown of thorns, which, with inexpressible poignancy, penetrated His temples; His eyes are dimmed with tears and dust; His cheeks, swollen by blows and defiled with spittle; His ears, shocked by blasphemous cries; His neck, torn by the scourges; His shoulders, bruised by the weighty instrument of His punishment; His feet, pierced by the nails; His body, livid and covered with wounds; His flesh, mangled and hanging in shreds, and with all this, gall and vinegar for His thirst, and the pangs of a long death-agony. Great God! what severity and atrociousness of torments in this virginal Body! What claims, therefore, to our gratitude!

Finally, the adorable Body of Jesus is united with the person of the divine Word, who is essential and true life. From this ineffable union it received a life divine in itself, and vivifying in our regard; for the divine Word, the Author of life, in being united to its own flesh, rendered it vivifying, as St. Cyril admirably expresses himself on this subject. It is, say the holy Doctors, not only the instrument of His most holy soul, but also the organ of the divinity. Therefore, the virtue which goes out from it performs all manner of prodigies upon souls and bodies. Its touch cured leprosy; its words drove away evil spirits; its saliva gave sight to the blind; the hem of its garment cured an issue of blood; a movement of its eyes converted the most hardened sinners. All these prerogatives are of such value, that Jesus Himself, the eternal Wisdom, wished to have them known, in order that His most holy flesh might derive glory from them. On this account, it rejoiced in not being subject to corruption; it rejoiced in its wonderful resurrection, in being placed at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and inundated with infinite sweetness: *thou shalt fill me with joy with thy countenance: at thy right hand are delights even to the end.* He has left this same Body in the divine Sacrament, that it might receive its

deserved honor from the Church and from Him who is the Head of the Church ; because it is here precisely that it enjoys the unparalleled prerogative of occupying the first place on our altars, in preference, as it were, to the sacred Soul and Divinity itself. What is in reality the object rendered more directly present by the power of the words of consecration, or as the theologians say, by the power of the sacrament? Is it the adorable Divinity? No; it is there as a concomitant. Is it His holy Soul? No; it is there by means of its natural union with the body. In virtue of the words of consecration, the sacred Body of Jesus Christ is directly present; His Soul and Divinity, indirectly. Not that we would say (as some might improperly take our meaning to be) that the Soul and Divinity are less perfectly present; since they are there in the same manner in which they are in Jesus Christ, living and glorious; but that in this mystery, the Body holds the first place. A distinguished author has very happily expressed this thought by the following comparison: Suppose that the favorite of a great prince is about to be married, and the prince, to honor him, assists in person at the marriage; in such a case, though the prince would be there, as elsewhere, the first in dignity, nevertheless, in re-

gard to the ceremony, his part is secondary, and yields to that of the bridegroom. Now, in the same manner, though the Divinity of Jesus Christ is infinitely superior to the precious Body, still, when our soul forms an alliance with the divine Saviour in the Eucharist, the bridegroom, that is, the virginal Body of the Man-God, holds the first place, and the Divinity is there as a concomitant; it accompanies and exalts the dignity of so great an action. I know not whether anything could be said more to the point, to show how estimable is this sacred Body, and how anxious Jesus is to have it glorified. If all these prerogatives are well grounded, as they are in fact, who can form an idea of the excellence of the devotion to the most Holy Heart of Jesus?

Though we may pass over, if we please, the physical qualities which embellish it — its natural perfections — inasmuch as it is the work of the Holy Ghost and the principle of life and movement, it must be conceded that in all the operations in which the adorable Body of Jesus is employed, His Heart has the most active and prominent part.

Philosophers discuss the question concerning the proper functions of the heart in the reciprocal relations which exist between the soul and the body; but whatever may be their sentiments in

this regard, the truth and excellence of our mysteries do not depend upon them. It is a fact that the heart is the organ which participates chiefly in the affections of the soul. A passionate love inflames the heart even sensibly; a sudden fright contracts, joy dilates, anxiety consumes it: and so of the other affections which rule the soul—all find a faithful echo in the heart. Thus, trouble, grief, affliction, desolation, affections of every kind, dilate or contract the heart.

Omitting the proofs which might be drawn from the other affections, we know that the transports of divine love and the tortures of interior sufferings produce strange effects on the heart. St. Francis Xavier, St. Philip Neri, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Stanislaus, felt so sensibly the ardor which consumed their hearts, that they were obliged to expose their bosoms to the air, and apply cloths, saturated with cold water, to assuage, in some degree, the flames, which were superior to their strength. And, on the other hand, interior sufferings weighed so heavily on the hearts of St. Teresa and St. Magdalene, that they would have died under them, unless sustained by the Almighty. Who would not be deeply moved whilst contemplating the most loving Heart of Jesus, a prey to so many and such varied affections, to so many and such cruel torments, and to so many and such

poignant agonies? Who would not be tenderly affected at the thought of the dejection, desolation and anguish which it had to endure? We know that, weighed down by anxiety, it sweated blood in the Garden of Olives. But what did it not endure during so many years, in which there was always present before the Saviour's eyes the unworthy treatment in store for Him? What anguish in anticipation, what cruel heart-agonies at seeing His blood shed in vain for so many souls who, despite His love, would be lost through their own fault!

And, moreover, was not the Heart the instrument of the soul in the practice of all the virtues? Was it not oppressed by the humiliations which it met with, weighed down by the patience it exercised? Was it not overcome by weariness, disgust, fear; devoured by zeal, consumed by charity? Did not all these affections so intense, these virtues so divine, find a corresponding echo in the Heart of Jesus? And did they not, in a word, cause the continued martyrdom and torture of this Heart? Who, then, can doubt that the chief part was given it in the labors and sufferings, which Jesus bore in His immaculate flesh? Hence our duty of rendering it our heartfelt gratitude.

3. We have, nevertheless, still another consideration to add: it is, that the vivifying flesh of Jesus

Christ contracts, by its union with the Word, two ineffable qualities: offered in sacrifice, it is a most pure holocaust, the most worthy atonement to the Heavenly Father; taken as nourishment, it is the most substantial food of immortality. Of the first effect the Scriptures and faith speak when they refer our salvation to the oblation made by Jesus Himself on the cross. *Jesus Christ coming into the world, saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not have; but Thou hast fitted to Me a body.* It is by the oblation of this Body that we are sanctified. That there is in His immaculate flesh a true food is what He Himself affirms: *My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.* And this is no common food, but the food of eternal life: *He who eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, hath life everlasting.*

These two wonderful effects of the flesh of Christ are those which procure our salvation: the first obtains for us the pardon of our sins, the second, an increase of grace: by the first, we are saved from hell; by the second, the way to heaven is made easy.

But could these transcendent favors be bestowed upon us without coming from the adorable Heart of Jesus? By no means. Recall the last scene of Calvary, when Jesus, having heaved His last sigh, remained hanging lifeless on the cross: there we see whence proceeded the sacraments, which

are the channels of priceless benefits. No Christian forgets that every good he has received from his birth, all he possesses now, all he hopes for in the future in the order of salvation, comes from the faith which he finds in the holy Church. Without this faith we should be like those unfortunate idolaters who, having lived for a few years in the darkness of error, are engulfed for eternity in the abyss of all woes. This is incontestable. But whence has this faith come to us, if not by the grace we received at the baptismal font? But, says St. Chrysostom, *whence have first flowed those precious waters, and from what fountain? From the cross of Jesus, from the Heart of the Saviour.* From the Heart of Jesus pierced on the cross, the gift of faith comes to us, and with it all the graces which accompany it.

If, then, there is a salutary bath, which purifies me from the original stain, which delivers me from the slavery of Satan, which closes hell under my feet, which makes me the friend of God, and not only His friend but His child, co-heir of Jesus Christ, which prepares me for other graces of every kind, and by which I hope to possess one day an infinite good: all this is due to the Sacred Heart of my Jesus. It were little to be born of faith, if I had not had a nourishment suited to preserve my spiritual life; and indeed from the transpierced

Heart of Jesus comes this nourishment of which I stand in need. *There proceeded thence*, says St. Chrysostom, *water, that is, baptism, which gave me spiritual birth, and blood, that is, the Eucharist, which sustains me each day.* Therefore, the greatest gift I receive after baptism comes to me likewise from the Sacred Heart. The same Saint is moved by a tender love whilst contemplating it. *The soldier*, he says, *has pierced the side; he has made a breach in the wall of the temple, and I have found a precious treasure and overflowing riches.* *The Jews have slaughtered the lamb, and I am satiated with the sacrament.* Of these treasures the Church is formed; in the water, she possesses the grace of regeneration, in the blood, the renewal of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, as often as I admire the grandeurs of the Church, or enjoy her maternal favors, I should acknowledge that, as *Eve was drawn from the side of Adam, so this mystic spouse is drawn from the side of the Saviour.* After this avowal, it is manifest that the innumerable graces, which flow to us by the interposition of the Church, are drawn from this divine Heart, whence the Church comes to us. And were there in this Heart no other object for our veneration but the wound, that inexhaustible source of so many graces, were there only this Heart considered materially, that would still be a prodigy of love.

CHAPTER IV.

EXCELLENCE OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS, ON ACCOUNT OF THE SPIRITUAL
OBJECT IT HAS IN VIEW.

The Heart of Jesus is the symbol of His virtues — The Heart of Jesus is the symbol of His riches — The Heart of Jesus is the Heart of a God.

THE most holy Heart of Jesus considered in itself is an object of immense value, and, consequently, deserves all our veneration; but this Heart is, at the same time, the symbol of the affections and interior sentiments of Jesus Christ. As a portrait can give us an idea of the person represented, as a sign can give us a notion of the thing signified, so the Heart can impart the knowledge of what it represents. And what does it represent? Only consider what naturally presents itself to our minds when we analyze a heart, and you will find that it is in some manner the living representative of all the gifts, which can enrich man interiorly, of all the affections of his soul, of all the virtues and perfections which adorn him. And this consideration is applicable to our Jesus; for when we prostrate ourselves before Him, we acknowledge

and adore the affections of His holy Soul with all its inseparable prerogatives. Let us consider this truth more at length.

1. Among those who bear the glorious name of Christians, there are very few that give a thought to the person of Christ. The greater part, content with those crude notions received amid the distractions of fickle youth, make no effort for further knowledge. Even among those who have more regard for religion, and strive to know something about it, how many are there that endeavor to behold the ineffable affections of Jesus, His divine virtues, all the prerogatives and all the actions of His holy Soul? How many, after having learned to know Him, live up to this knowledge? Let us see now what those devoted to the Sacred Heart can easily and almost imperceptibly accomplish. And this is the singular privilege of the devotion. All the actions, all the affections, all the gifts of this great Soul are reflected upon His Heart as upon a mirror; it is impossible not to contemplate them there, when we honor the Heart of Jesus. Prostrate at the feet of Jesus, who offers us His Heart enveloped in flames, let us consider what happens within us at the sight of such a spectacle. If we are sinners, unfortunately steeped in iniquity, this Heart will appear to us as ineffable holiness,

supreme justice, which cannot but hate sin. Yet we shall perceive that, at the same moment, a sweet hope of pardon is aroused in our souls, provided we sincerely wish to return to our God. At all times, we experience in its presence the influence of its divine purity. If we are tepid in God's service, we shall perceive its divine fervor, its ardent charity, which, gently arousing us from our torpor, will not allow us to perform our duty languidly. If we are animated by a holy charity, then indeed will the divine Heart hasten to communicate its favors to us; it will show us how it is the centre of all hearts, their life, their light, their sure repose, their defence, their support, their protection, their company, in a word, their every good. Thus, to the person in need of assistance, the sight of the Sacred Heart discovers the sources of graces ever ready to be bestowed upon the unfortunate. He who is in darkness and inquietude finds in this Heart abundant light; he who is a prey to diffidence and fear, sees here the treasures of confidence. In every necessity we find here an opportune remedy. To comprehend all this, there is no need of long discourses: the Heart, and the Heart alone, viewed with the eyes of faith, reveals to us all these consoling truths. The daily experience of the faithful lovers of this Heart corroborates

what I have said. By its means we obtain a most intimate knowledge of the holy Soul of Jesus Christ, honor all its affections by a more special homage, and offer a more profound veneration to each of His virtues. Finally, what can be more beneficial to a Christian than to think of that holy Soul that thinks so frequently of him?

2. But more remains to be said upon this subject. The most holy Soul of Jesus Christ is not only all love for us, it is also a treasury of immense riches; that is to say, it contains all the riches that the Word deposited in it, when uniting itself to it; and these riches were deposited there for its exaltation and for our advantage. Now, since all these gifts are reflected upon the Heart, nothing can so appropriately receive our veneration. But what are these gifts? Who can tell their excellence? When a young virgin is chosen to be the bride of some powerful monarch, a throne and retinue are assigned her, presents are heaped upon her; she is surrounded by splendor and magnificence in keeping with the dignity of her new position. But could the Eternal Word, after having formed an ineffable alliance with this blessed Soul, and communicated to it the supreme good it possesses, its being, its personality, refrain from communicating also the immensity of the graces

and gifts which become so noble a creature and so sublime a dignity? Thus, whilst forming in His mind the design of this creature, He gave it proportions in harmony with the end in view, and in the act of creation bestowed upon it the plenitude of His graces. "God doth not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son: and He hath given all things into His hand." (*John* iii. 34.) To the saints, however, He imparts the Spirit by measure, and the same rule He observes in bestowing His favors. "There are diversities of gifts," (1 *Cor.* xii. 4:) to some is given the grace of the Apostolate, to others the gift of prophecy; some receive knowledge; others, the power of discerning the workings of the soul, and so with the rest; but the Soul of Jesus received at the same time the infusion of all gifts and graces, an infusion so abundant that it is of this fountain alone all the faithful drink. "Of His fulness we all have received." (*John* i. 16.) The Christian should enter this august sanctuary of the Divinity and admire the treasures which are hidden therein, and that infinite purity which could not permit the least shadow of imperfection in a purity entirely celestial. He should, at the same time, admire the grace of sanctity raised to the highest degree, which infinitely surpasses that of all the saints;

he should consider, likewise, the charity, humility, obedience, all the virtues of the Man-God. Add to this the consummation of grace, which is the beatitude of enjoying the brightest vision of God ; for from the first instant His holy Soul saw the Divine Essence more clearly than all the blessed together, and in the same proportion loved the Lord with a love that inundated it with felicity. Consider, also, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which were then showered upon it, so that He knew the past, present, future, nothing escaping His notice, destined as He was to be the Sovereign Judge of the whole world. Add to all this the power of suspending the laws of nature by miracles of every kind, of curing the sick, of casting out devils, of ruling the winds and the sea, of raising to life bodies already putrefied ; and, again, the power of forgiving sin, of converting sinners, of instituting the sacraments, of establishing a sacrifice, and of bestowing upon men supernatural graces and favors. Finally, consider the grand prerogative of being the Head of the Church militant as well as triumphant, the King of angels and men, superior to all creatures, the source of all heavenly blessings, and all the gifts which proceed from the Father for the good of the Church. And after this consideration, who is there that will not

burn with holy love for an object so holy, so noble, so divine? With what affection shall we not regard the Sacred Heart henceforth, in the contemplation and love of which, we find and love such treasures?

3. The greatest of all the wonders remains yet to be considered. This Heart is united with the person of the only Son of God, and is united in a manner so unspeakable, that in all rigor we may say that the Heart of the Word is the Heart of God. To consider it in this light, it would be better if, instead of speaking about it, we would prostrate ourselves before it and excite in ourselves sentiments of respect, adoration, humiliation, love and fear, lest "the searcher of majesty be overwhelmed by glory." (*Prov.* xxv. 27.)

Who can describe the ineffable union accomplished in this mystery? The Heart of Jesus enjoys the singular privilege of being the Heart of a God and the Heart of a man at the same time; hence by the most incomprehensible of prodigies, things the most separated are united, the finite with the infinite, the mortal with the immortal, the measurable with the immeasurable, the plenitude of being with limited being, everything with nothing. And how essential this union is, this divine espousal, how glorious and ineffable,

surpassing all we can conceive! The union which exists between the soul and the body is a miracle of nature, and is always dissoluble. By the hand of death, the bonds which unite the soul to the body are broken; but death, which separated the Soul of Jesus from His Heart, could not separate the Heart from the person of the Word, with which it was so intimately united. Therefore, as says an illustrious Doctor, a great prodigy ensued: the Heart lived in the tomb in the midst of death; it died on Calvary in the midst of life. It lived by preserving its union with the Word, which is the source of life; it died by losing the life it received from the soul. Again, the union which the blessed in heaven enjoy with God is a miracle of grace; at all times this union is but accidental. They indeed see, enjoy, and possess God, but with a limit within the perfection of their actions and their powers; the Heart of Jesus, however, is not only united with God, but subsists in the person of the Word. This dignity is so sublime, and so excellent, and this union so intimate, that they are entirely beyond our comprehension.

If the union of this Heart with the Word is inexplicable, who will be able to tell the communications which this Heart, in virtue of its union, has with the most holy Trinity? Who can unveil

the mystery of its interior life, explain the value of its actions, its affections? Sin has disturbed the entire kingdom of God on this earth; inordinate self-love has caused the Lord to be forgotten, and the forgetfulness of the Lord has been the cause of rebellion and death everywhere. Where, then, shall the Heavenly Father reign in peace? In the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There is not there, and cannot be, sin of any kind; there the love of self is the love of God, because this love begins and ends with God. And it is as impossible for God to be forgotten there as it is for God to forget Himself.

The Holy Spirit is that infinite gift which sanctifies the whole earth, and bestows graces upon all souls. But where were they bestowed with the same abundance as upon this Heart, where they were received in fulness? Whence does a better return come than from this Heart, whose actions are of infinite value? Thence a better return should come, because the Sacred Heart is the living temple of God, the Sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, the delight of the most holy Trinity, which reposes there as upon a throne of infinite sanctity, and with the greatest complacency, since it is there loved perfectly, and receives that homage which all creatures should pay it, but which no creature

can pay properly ; in fine, there is found the bond with which the human nature is joined to the Divine, the centre where the finite is united with the infinite, the altar on which a victim of immense value honors and appeases an infinite Majesty. This is effected by a Heart which is not only deified, but is the Heart of God. Ah ! if one is not moved by this sight, and the consideration of this Heart ; if he is not entirely enraptured, and his heart inflamed with love, will he ever be ?



CHAPTER V.

EXCELLENCE OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART ON ACCOUNT OF THE LOVE WITH WHICH JESUS HAS ESPECIALLY HONORED IT.

The eternal Love of the Divine Word for mankind — Love of the Incarnate Word for Mankind in the Mysteries of His mortal life — Love of Jesus for mankind in the Mysteries of His Passion and Death — Love of Jesus for mankind in the Mysteries of His Resurrection and Ascension — Love of Jesus concentrated in the Divine Eucharist — Devotion to the Sacred Heart an excellent means of glorifying the love of Jesus for men, and of reviving the love of men for Jesus.

BY the homage we pay to the adorable Heart of Jesus, we honor, as we have already shown, the interior sentiments of the Man-God, the affections of His holy Soul, His virtues, His gifts, His ineffable dignity. Another consideration, the ardent charity with which Jesus has loved us, should pre-eminently attract our attention and move our hearts. Indeed, the glory rendered to this is the principal feature of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the most precious fruit to be derived from it; for, no nobler end can a Christian soul have in view than to know and cherish this

love ; and it is the knowledge, even ever so imperfect, of this immense charity, which moves us to make a return of love. May it please Jesus Christ to manifest this charity to us in all its intensity, in order to subject us to so sweet a constraint.

1. That the Heart of Jesus will recall to the mind of every one who considers it, the love He has had for us, cannot be doubted. The Heart is the natural symbol of love ; since the flames, the thorns, the cross, all the emblems that surround it, are so many witnesses of His love. Here commence the wonders of divine charity ; for, is there anything more wonderful than the very love Jesus has for us ? When a Christian hears it said that Jesus thinks of him, loves him, he is inclined to consider such an assertion paradoxical. What ! he can with reason reply, does Jesus busy Himself about me ? That He preserves me ; that He does not plunge me into the abyss of woe, as I deserve, is a great mercy ; that He still showers His graces upon me, honors me with His compassion, is a wondrous liberality ; but that He loves me, this is impossible. Would I attach my heart to a loathsome object ? Would I caress a worm of the earth, a hideous toad ? Am I capable of wishing for the good of a treacherous and infuriated enemy ? an impious and sacrilegious man, a murderer ? And

has Jesus done all this in my regard? No; it is impossible. The one who strives to persuade me of this, strives to deceive me. These are the reflections which the person, who hears for the first time that Jesus loves him, would make: "What is man, O my God, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" Faith tells us plainly, that it is not an error, a fiction, that it is not presumption to believe that Jesus loves us; it would be an error, on the contrary, an intolerable error, to listen to the deceptive prompting of our hearts, which sometimes urge us to think that we are not loved by Him.

I have said that Jesus loves me; but is that saying enough? If I go back in imagination to the beginning of time, and penetrate in some manner into eternity, I find Jesus, the divine Word which always existed; "in the beginning was the Word." He was infinitely happy in Himself and in the plenitude of every good; "He was with God." Still He thought of me; for, I was present to His love and was loved by Him from all eternity. I was before Him with all my miseries, and He loved me; with all my ingratitude, and He loved me; with all my rebellious actions, and He loved me; with all my foolish provocations, and He loved me. And more, as He saw me laden with

sin, worthy of chastisement, He offered Himself to His Father, and formed in my regard wonderful designs of love. The charity of Jesus is then an eternal charity: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." (*Jer.* xxxi. 3.) The holy virgin, St. Agnes, was right when she said: "I have been already espoused to another lover." We have been loved by Christ from all eternity. Now, were we to learn that a person had loved us for a whole year, we should be unable to refrain from being moved most sensibly; but were we to learn that another had consecrated all the days of his life to us, having loved us, from the first moment of his existence, day and night, without cessation or repose, we should consider it a prodigy of love. Jesus has thought of us from all eternity, has loved us, has taken pleasure in what He has meditated for our good; and all this, far from ravishing our hearts, even finds us insensible. Oh! the charity, the incomprehensible charity of Jesus Christ! And all this love which is lost in eternity, is but the opening chapter in the divine history of the charity of Jesus for men.

When God wished to make this world out of nothing, it was through the Word that everything was done: "All things were made through Him; and without Him was made nothing that was

made." (*John* i. 3.) It was the divine Word again, as the holy Fathers teach, that took upon Himself to regulate all the economy of the old law. He it was who was called by Malachi, "the Angel of the Testament;" (*Malach.* iii. 1.) He it was who appeared to the patriarchs, spoke to the prophets; He it was who made the covenant with Abraham, and amidst thunder and lightning, gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, conducted the people of Israel through the desert, and renewed the courage of Josue, Gideon, and the other holy leaders of His people. This is what the Prince of the Apostles teaches us, when he says that the Prophets foretold the time of the coming of Christ by the inspiration of His spirit, which was in them: "Searching into what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ might signify in them." And Saint Jude, the Apostle, insinuates the same, when he observes that Jesus, "having saved the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, afterwards destroyed those who did not believe." In fine, the entire old law is but an expression of the constant love of the divine Word which, if not openly, at least secretly, is lavished upon us. However, this is but the dawn of the love of the Son of God for mankind; it has not yet reached its meridian splendor.

2. When the time had arrived, and "the good-

ness and kindness of our Saviour God " appeared under a mortal garb, in the miseries to which He was subjected and in the entire gift of Himself to us, then the immense charity of Jesus Christ shone forth with great brilliancy.

The only Son of God, equal to the Father in power, justice, holiness, and perfection of every kind, going out of Himself, as it were, manifested Himself to the world, and, inflamed with the most ardent love, becomes like one of us, conversing familiarly with us, and striving for no greater conquests, by all His artifices and condescensions, than the dominion of our hearts.

The sufferings of the divine Infant alone should soften the heart of the most obdurate. A God wrapped up in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a dark cavern, suffering from hunger and cold, in tears, is an unexampled humiliation. Why does He undergo all this? It is for the love of us. A God a fugitive, taking up His abode in a foreign land, and begging for a morsel of bread is, in very deed, an unheard of debasement. And what induced Him to humble Himself in this manner, if not His love? Was it not love that kept Him for so long a time in an obscurity, engaged in toilsome occupations, wholly obedient to two of his own creatures? Was it not love that induced Him to

afflict His body by a fast of forty days ; to allow Himself to be tempted, to be separated from His most holy Mother ?

Who can estimate the charity with which Jesus was animated, when He was preparing for us the treasures of which the Church is the depository ? He went through the cities and towns sowing the seed of the divine Word, destined to produce the fruits of eternal life for us. Always actuated by love, He took care to form His apostles and disciples Himself, that they might be our fathers and pastors. And this same love moved Him to lay the foundation of His Church, and to fortify it with His divine assistance, as with an impregnable tower. This love caused the fountains of baptism to flow, in which we are purified from sin, and instituted those other holy sacraments which strengthen and confirm our souls, whether in combats of life or in the agony of death. This love sanctified the married state and consecrated the priestly order ; this love makes Him remain in the midst of us, to be our spiritual nourishment and our support in the trials of this mortal pilgrimage. Love has done all this — the most passionate love has heaped these favors upon us.

3. We must now turn to what the Prophets, who appeared on Mount Thabor, called His *departure*,

that is, His passion and death. But no mind can comprehend, no tongue express the love which Jesus has manifested for us. Is not this very *departure*, an excess of love far above our comprehension? That the only Son of God, who sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty, on a throne of everlasting glory and felicity, is here below in the agony of death is an excess of inconceivable anguish and bitterness; that the eternal Justice is bound, loaded with chains, led from tribunal to tribunal, is an excess of violence and perfidy; that Innocence itself, the essential Holiness, is condemned, is an excess of injustice and iniquity. Count the blows of the scourges, which mangled His flesh, the number of thorns which pierced His head, and you find an excess of cruelty. Hear the blasphemies and the unfeeling railleries of which He is the victim, and you have an excess of barbarity. Consider the weight of the Cross under which He fell several times, owing to exhaustion from the loss of blood; an excess of inhumanity. Contemplate Him exposed to the immodest gaze of a populous city, placed disgracefully between two thieves, and subject to the anguish of a long and cruel agony, heaving His last sigh; and is this not an excess of ignominy, outrage and grief? What brought about all these

excesses, what inspired them, decreed them, if not divine love? Yes, this love, infinitely ingenious in torturing its victim, shows itself throughout. Jesus begins the career of His sufferings with a kiss, which, though the sign of perfidy on the part of His enemy, was none the less the most sincere expression of the sentiments of Him, who gave the sweet name of friend to a traitor! "friend, for what art thou come?" Love fears not chains, and blows, and wounds; nothing can more quickly show the force and energy of love than the most cruel torments; and Jesus accepts them, embraces them with joy. Love cannot remain hidden; it sighs for the moment when it may appear in all its intensity; and Jesus cries out: "How am I straitened until my bloody baptism shall be accomplished!" Contemplate Him upon the painful bed of the cross, where love has placed Him, and see if everything does not speak of love. His head is inclined, says St. Augustine, to give us the kiss of peace; His arms are extended to embrace us and to press us to His bosom; His feet are nailed to await our tardy approach; His hands are fastened to the wood that we may have no fear of chastisement: offering to us His transpierced side, He shows us His Heart, in which He has promised, not only an asylum and protection, but

joy, peace, and love. Finally, listen to His words; He speaks during His passion by as many mouths as there are wounds in His body, and drops of blood shed for our sake. All these mouths tell the love which He has for us, and the love we should have for Him. See, says He, the state to which I am reduced on account of my love for thee; see the titles that I have to thy love in return. If I had not loved so intensely, I should not be afflicted thus. Turn not thine eyes away from Him, who abandons Himself to such sufferings for thee.

Yet in the great work of the Redemption we have more to consider than what Jesus has done and suffered for us. What is it? There is another abyss of love that gives rise to obligations of no less import toward the divine Saviour:—that infinity of labors and sufferings which He would have undertaken if our interests had needed it. He died for us but once; but had our salvation demanded it, He would have suffered a thousand deaths. He died for the salvation of mankind, but He would have done as much for each particular person. He endured an agony of three hours; but if it had been necessary, He would have remained in this great suffering for whole ages; and instead of enjoying the presence of our

sweet Jesus on the altar, we should have seen Him in an interminable agony on the cross. It were a sad spectacle ; still Jesus would not have shunned such a sacrifice. Now, that the Redemption is accomplished, have we less obligations to this ineffable charity ?

Whoever wishes to weigh attentively these brief reflections and penetrate at leisure the mysteries, of which we have given but the outlines, will begin to understand that we have reason to glorify the charity of Christ, our divine Redeemer.

4. Do not believe that the history of the love of Jesus ends with His death. He rises all glorious from the tomb on the third day ; but He is still the same, still burning with love for us. The time is approaching when He is to leave this world, to go to His Father ; but He seems to be unable to separate Himself from men. He remains with them to enjoy their society, to heap new favors upon them, to strengthen them with new graces, to confirm them in the truths most important for them to know, and to arm them with the most sovereign authority. After having thus aided, strengthened, armed them with counsel and spiritual armor, He ascends into heaven indeed, but He does so in order to protect them more efficaciously from on high. He presents Himself to His Father

with the scars of His sacred wounds, to plead our cause. "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, a Just One." (1 *John* ii. 1.) He is not content with having sown the seed of immortality on earth, but sends the Holy Spirit to make it fruitful with His graces and gifts: "If I go, I will send Him to you." (*John* xvi. 7.) And He is not content with these graces, so infinitely precious, but common to all: He adds others, which are so proper and peculiar to each one, that none can fully know them but the person who receives them. Christian soul, that readeest these pages, enter into the inmost recesses of thy heart, and consider these graces with loving gratitude. Has not thy Saviour on many occasions given thee the most touching proofs of His particular regard for thee? Considering the years of thy youth, dost thou not see that loving Providence, which drew thee not only from the greatest temporal dangers, but from eternal death? To whom art thou indebted for the Christian education given thee by thy parents, thy teachers, and directors? How is it that none of them are wanting in their duty to thee, that zeal for thy welfare is so lively in them? He has not entrusted the affair entirely to others; He has taken it upon Himself to direct thee: "I have made thee, and I will bear; I will carry and

I will save." (*Is.* xlv. 4.) If Jesus had not prevented such a meeting; if He had not removed such a person; if He had not assisted thee by the aid of another; who can tell what would have become of thee? But He provided for everything, and sometimes in such an unheard-of manner, that His intervention seems to thee most wonderful.

If we, disregarding these multiplied proofs of His charity, allowed ourselves to wander away from Him and yield to the impetuosity of our passions, we saw provided for us another wonder of charity. Jesus might have allowed us to remain at the bottom of the abyss into which we had cast ourselves, and He had reasons for acting thus; but, on the contrary, He gave us no rest until He had won our hearts again. He undertook the conquest of our hearts by the assaults of love; sometimes He struck terror into our souls; sometimes He aroused us by sudden appeals to us, either placing before our eyes the chaste beauty of virtue, or filling with bitterness that life of disorder and sin. Again, He urged certain persons to give us saving counsel, dictated by friendship; at another time, He removed those who were seeking our ruin: in fine, He took advantage of every means to draw us to Himself. And when we at last gave heed to these invitations, we know how

He received us. We durst not raise our eyes to heaven. All covered with confusion, our hearts pierced by bitter grief, we were bathed in tears; but He was the first to meet us, and embracing us tenderly, pressed us to His bosom. He dressed our wounds, poured into them divine balm, and amid the tears that He caused us to shed, let us feel, in the inmost recesses of our hearts, the sweet confidence of a generous pardon. What proofs of a particular assistance, of a loving providence beyond all expression!

And all this is between us and God. The eye of man has not penetrated these mysteries; it has not seen them; it cannot see them. Jesus knows them; we know them. This is enough for Him; for He is content with having consoled us in our troubles, solaced us in our trials, sustained us in our weakness, succored us in our most pressing necessities. O love, infinite love of our sweet Jesus! In a word, if we would comprehend the extent of this reign of love, we must cast our eyes up to heaven, upon the earth, and down into hell: everywhere we shall find not only vestiges, but the most convincing proofs of it. If we cast our eyes up to heaven and see the thrones ready to receive us into the enjoyment of everlasting happiness, we shall have a proof of the love of Jesus. Let us

cast our eyes upon the earth, and consider what we possess of spiritual or temporal blessings; all comes from the love of Jesus for us, by which all things conspire to our salvation. Let us look down into the abyss of hell: we can with reason say that our not being tortured by those avenging flames, our escape from them, is due to the love of Jesus for us. Without this love, we should have been condemned to this eternal prison of fire: fire would be our food and drink. That we are not now the hopeless prey of those consuming flames, is because the flames of love in the Heart of Jesus were more intense in our regard than the flames of hell. Such is the charity of our Redeemer!

5. Finally, all these proofs, all these demonstrations, these wonders of love, have been collected by our dear Saviour in a sacrament, to the end that we might have a most pleasing memorial of them, and receive them thus united as a single treasure. It is evident that I mean the sacrament which is pre-eminently called the sacrament of love. As Baptism is the sacrament of faith, Confirmation the sacrament of strength, so the Eucharist is properly the sacrament of love. God has in fact given as in the Eucharist an epitome of His most ineffable wonders, and to the astonishment of Angels and men, has rendered these wonders

subordinate to His love. He hath "made a remembrance of His wonderful works, being a merciful and gracious Lord," (*Ps. cx. 4:*) wonders of wisdom, when we see a God infinitely great invent an unspeakable means of giving Himself entirely to men without terrifying them by His majesty; and withdrawing Himself from them without ceasing to be with them: wonders of power, when, exerting His almighty power, He changes all the laws of nature to put His invention into execution: wonders of goodness, because He finds such an admirable manner of uniting Himself to men and of being united to them as intimately and completely as the food which sustains them: wonders, in fine, that transcend all conception. Whence come all the riches we receive from Jesus Christ? They come, without doubt, from the adorable wood of the Cross, from the merits of the great Victim who was sacrificed and the High-Priest who was the sacrificer. By this immolation, divine Justice was appeased and peace made between God and men. God, reconciled to men by Jesus Christ, granted them the favor of divine adoption, made them heirs of His Kingdom, and heaped upon them infinite graces. The sacrifice itself, though offered up in a different way, is perpetuated in this mystery of love. Here, it is renewed every day, and

in a great number of places, at the same time. It is the sacrifice foretold by Malachi: "in every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation." (*Mal.* i. 11.) This is the sacrifice of the new law. Here, is continually renewed the most unheard-of wonder: "at the voice of the priest of God in the hour of sacrifice," says St. Gregory in his dialogues, "the heavens are opened, and in this mystery of Jesus Christ, choirs of Angels are present; the sublimest and lowliest things are commingled; earth is united with heaven, the visible and invisible are made one." Here God receives the thanksgiving that is His due for the innumerable benefits which we have received from Him; here is offered the Victim of expiation for the iniquities that inundate the world; here is made the perfect petition for the graces of which the world stands in need; here is rendered to God a worship worthy of Him; for His infinite majesty could never have received the honor due to it but from a God. In very deed we may say that the holy Eucharist is to the Church what the soul is to the body. As the soul gives to the body a rational life, a human life, so the Eucharist gives to the Church a spiritual life, a divine life: "he that eateth Me, the same shall also live by Me." (*John* vi. 58.) As the spirit

causes the body to grow, by diffusing life and nourishment through all the members, so the Eucharist diffuses everywhere strength, vigor, courage, virtue; and as the body borrows its splendor and beauty from the soul, so the Church receives her beauty, her glory, her embellishment and all her excellence from this inward life, the holy Eucharist. The Church lives, then, and lives by the infinite power of that God whom she possesses in the sacrament of the altar; for from this comes to her the vital air she breathes: she breathes naught but Him. The leader of a very celebrated school said, "this sacrament seems to be the centre to which all the devotion of the Church is directed;"* since the temples, the altars, the priests, the ceremonies, the feasts, have no other object in view but to honor Jesus Christ in the Eucharist. The Church lives by the power of God in the Eucharist, for "all the other sacraments," as St. Thomas teaches, "seem to be directed to this as to their end."† It is manifest, as the holy Doctor explains it, that Holy Order has for its end the consecration of the Eucharist; Baptism, the reception of it; Confirmation, the strengthening of the Christian, in order that he may not be separated from it; Penance and Extreme Unction, that he

* Scotus in 4. dist. 8. q. 1.

† S. Th., p. 3, quæst. 6.

may be rendered worthy of it; and matrimony, finally, is but a sign of the union of the Church with Jesus Christ, a union symbolized in the Eucharist. The Church lives, and it is by the power of God under the sacramental species; for, all the laws she prescribes being laws of love; all the exercises she practises, exercises of love; all the means she proposes, means of love pre-eminently; all the felicity she hopes for, the joys of love; the God she adores, the God of love: she can have no other life, no other support, but this mystery. The Church lives, but by the power of God under the sacramental species; for even in Purgatory, where the divine Sun is obscured, the souls which are being purified, receive, by means of the Eucharist, vivifying grace, fortitude and refreshment in their sufferings. The Church lives, but by the power of God under the sacramental species; since all riches are contained in this treasure. In it is the Sun that illumines her faith, the anchor of her hope, the furnace of her charity. Without the Eucharist, religion can have no sacrifice; without it, the martyrs are deprived of the blood that animates them in the combat; the virgins, of the wine that begets their virtue; the confessors, of the mystery that sanctifies them. The penitent, says St. Cyprian, regard it as the haven for which

they sigh; communicants, as the milk that causes them to become strong; the perfect, as a foretaste of the beatitude to which they aspire. The sorrowing find in it consolation; the sick, a remedy; the agonizing, a viaticum; the dying, the germ and root of immortality. Deprive the world of this mystery, and you will deprive the earth of its sun, the Church of her life, the faithful of their spiritual strength. Now, will not any one, who meditates, however slightly, on these manifestations of the love of a God, understand what His Heart is to us, and how much we owe it?

6. All that has been said makes conspicuous the divine excellence that we admire in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Indeed, from the very moment that there is question of glorifying the love of Jesus, and especially His love in the great work of the Redemption, and in the mystery of the holy Eucharist, these sovereign proofs of His immense love for us, ~~is it~~ not evident that no object more natural, more apt, better suited to represent this love could be chosen, than the admirable Heart of Jesus?

The heart, in the eyes of the learned and the unlearned, the great and the lowly, according to the notions of all men, is the most expressive and natural symbol of love. We say that one who

loves has a warm heart; that the one who is without affection, has a cold heart; to manifest our love for others, we would wish them to see how our hearts are affected in their regard, since it is so true that the heart of itself is the most perfect image of love. We see why long discourses are unnecessary to persuade us to love Jesus, when He presents His Heart to us. "Who would not cherish," says St. Bernard, "a Heart so sorely wounded? Who would not love a Heart so loving, embrace a Heart so chaste?" And by cherishing, loving, and embracing this Heart, do we not glorify the charity of Jesus? These two acts, our regard for the Sacred Heart, and the glory we thereby render to the charity of Jesus, are here in unison, because they are inseparable. He who plucks the lily, carries with him, even without perceiving it, its sweet perfume. O wonderful condescension! Ravishing simplicity of the designs of God! The Church, in her affectionate regard for her divine Spouse, fixes upon Him, according to the expression of the Canticles, the chaste gaze of the dove: with Him she recreates herself, with Him she is inebriated with the most pure delights. The principal actions of His life, His august titles, the special rights He has over her, she holds most dear, keeps in grateful remembrance, and pro-

poses them to the veneration and loving gratitude of the faithful. For this reason she honors His holy Name by a solemn festival; she prepares herself in Advent to receive the infant Saviour; she does penance during Lent to receive Him in His triumph; she recalls, by touching ceremonies, the sufferings and outrages of the Passion; and in the course of the year, by means of successive solemnities, she places before our eyes, one after another, the principal mysteries of His life. What besides? Was it possible to add another mode of glorifying Him? Yes; after having contemplated at leisure the Son of God, celebrated all that He has done, returned thanks for His favors bestowed upon us, mirrored in ourselves, as far as possible, His virtues: it was necessary that we should ascend, as far as we can, up the holy mountain, and there regarding the love which was the fountain source of everything, render to this love gratitude, veneration, homage and glory. This is precisely what Jesus had in view when He offered us His divine Heart. By it He has invited us to these sublime heights, elevated us even to this ineffable love; and the Church, by offering us the Heart of her divine Spouse, urges us to glorify His intense Charity. Who is there, though he had a heart of marble, that will not hearken to such invitations?

Moreover, Jesus intended, as we have said, to arouse, by this means, devotion to His passion and death, as well as to the holy Eucharist. How easy and salutary does this devotion become! The sight alone of this Heart would surely awaken devotion. Besides, the divine Saviour has been pleased to surround it with so many emblems, calculated to give us a lively and expressive picture of His sufferings, that it is not possible for us to contemplate this divine Heart, without recalling to mind, at the same time, all that He has endured for our sake, and exciting in our breasts a most affectionate and compassionate remembrance of it. For who can say that the wounds of Jesus, contemplated in His Heart, are not most eloquent, most capable of moving us and ravishing our hearts? In His Heart they are united with what caused them. The wound is there, and the love which was the instrument, is there also; the thorns are there, and the love which platted the crown is there also; the cross is there, and the love which nailed Him to the cross; the flames are there, and the love which supports them and communicates to them an incredible ardor. The faithful cannot see one without seeing the other; they cannot think of one without thinking of the other; they cannot prostrate themselves before the Sacred

Heart without renewing the memory of the torments inflicted on the Saviour. Finally, Jesus wishes to restore devotion to the holy Eucharist, a devotion but languidly practised by the generality of Christians. Is there a more intimate relation than that which exists between these two objects? The Eucharist is the greatest pledge of the love of Jesus for His disciples: "He loved them unto the end;" but His Heart is the living temple of this love. The Eucharist is the perpetual sacrifice of the Church; His Heart, as we have said, is the altar on which the sacrifice is offered up. In the Eucharist is the most perfect and purest worship that the earth renders to heaven; but it is so, by reason of this Heart, which there burns with divine love, without being consumed. In fine, the Heart remains there living and glorious; it there receives souls, strengthens, enlightens, and perfects them; and this, because the remembrance of the divine Eucharist is as inseparable from the Sacred Heart as light is from the sun.

It is evident, after all that has been said, that the Sacred Heart is a truly marvellous abridgment of the most remarkable favors bestowed on us by Christ; and that from the moment this Heart is known and appreciated, the reign of

charity will be reëstablished on earth. Consider the sublime end which the devotion to the adorable Heart of Jesus has in view. May these powerful motives reduce to silence those who speak disrespectfully of it; and may the hearts of all, influenced by these motives, be carried away with admiration and love. Nothing better adapted for such a purpose can be found. But, away with all apprehension; let us rather believe that all will embrace this devotion ardently, and consecrate themselves to it devoutly until they are consumed by love.



CHAPTER VI.

EXCELLENCE OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS ON ACCOUNT OF THE END IN
VIEW.

The Holy Eucharist, the work of His love, is to be honored — The outrages committed against it by heretical and irreligious persons — Outrages and ingratitude from Christians — Outrages from certain chosen Souls — Devotion to the Sacred Heart a reparation for these outrages.

WE have thus far considered the object which is adored in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and have also endeavored in various ways to show its excellence. It is now necessary to find out the end our good God had in view in offering this new incentive to our piety. It is evident that He aimed at gaining greater honor for His Sacred Humanity, deeper and more tender gratitude for His love; and He chose this devotion as the most effectual means to excite our piety. Indeed, what have we to do on this earth but to love and glorify our divine Redeemer? However, He has proposed a special intention to our piety, and one that furnishes the most powerful motives for our embracing the devotion. He

wished, as He revealed to His servant, and as the Church teaches in her Liturgy, a special reparation of honor for the contempt, coldness, ingratitude, and outrages which He endures in the sacrament of His love; and for this purpose, fervent communions should be offered up, generous consecrations made of self to His service, and ample amends for all the insults heaped upon Him. And if these were merely questions of pleasing Jesus, who would not consider himself infinitely happy in being able to give Him this satisfaction? Who would not cherish the ambition of being among those chosen souls who, entirely forgetful of themselves, are solely occupied with Jesus; and who, taking to heart the insults He receives, and grieved at seeing His glory so unworthily trodden under foot, strive to make amends for all He undergoes? Jesus has every right to our homage. But if our hearts be not moved by generosity, let us at least yield to the necessity of repairing the honor of our divine Master. In truth, let us say it for our confusion, the world is the continual witness of two prodigies of such a character, that it would be difficult to say which is the more wonderful: God on the one side, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, places no bounds to the effusions of His charity; and man, on the other, exhausts the

resources of his inventive malice to insult Him. "The kings of the earth have risen up and the princes met together against the Lord and against His Christ," says the royal Prophet. This was not only during His mortal life; it is so even in our days. The fury of men and the rage of the demons in His regard, far from decreasing, have rather increased in the course of time. Pious souls, consider for a moment the love Jesus has shown for you, notwithstanding your tepidity and ingratitude, and you will not refuse that special veneration for His Heart which He asks of you as a compensation for His outraged love.

1. The Holy Eucharist, for any one who wishes to appreciate it properly, is *solely* and *entirely* the work of love. Try to ponder attentively what motive Jesus could have had in instituting it, what object in view in submitting to so many sacrifices, working so many miracles as He does in this mystery, and you will see that love and love alone actuated Him. Was His presence among men necessary for the government of the world? His divinity pervades everything. Was it necessary for Jesus in person to help man to do good to man? It was not. Jesus could have showered down upon us from the highest heavens all graces; and as an outward sign sufficed in the other sacra-

ments, so in this He could have used the same means of bread. Seek for reasons as much as you please; all will fail until you come to that which is the great and only reason—His love for us. “His delight is to be with the children of men.” Tell a princess, whose child is ill, to give herself no trouble concerning it, as the domestics appointed for that purpose will do everything that is necessary, and do it well; she will not be persuaded by your words. A mother’s love has no rest unless it does all itself. She must attend to the child herself, give it food, medicines, sweetmeats; her own hands must administer everything; and in doing all, she bestows upon the object of her solicitude the caresses of a mother. Our Jesus could have heaped benefits upon us in a thousand ways; He has done so preëminently; yet He was not content unless He bestowed His favors in person. Besides, He could have done this by limiting His personal presence to the act in which we receive Him; but He added to it His permanent presence with us, remaining day and night enclosed in a ciborium and abandoned by men, in order to be near us, and ever ready to listen to us when we choose to speak to Him. He willed—unheard-of prodigy of love!—that the faithful should have Him always with them, keep Him in the tabernacle, carry Him from

place to place, speak to Him, hold Him a perpetual prisoner of love; so that earth should have no reason to envy heaven. But He was not content with His presence; He caused us to experience two other effects of ineffable love, effects so incomparable and so far exceeding human understanding, that the mind recoils from belief in them when it hears them for the first time. The divine prudence of the Church urged her in the beginning of Christianity to hold back this truth from the catechumens under instruction, to the end that their weak faith might not, so to say, be scandalized. I allude to the sacrifice which Jesus makes of Himself on our altars, and to the union with us when we receive Him in the sacrament. In fact, what could be the necessity of sacrificing Himself continually for us? He could have instituted a rite, by means of which the memory of His Passion and the sacrifice on the Cross might be recalled to our minds, and the merits of the same applied to our souls. This would have sufficed for our salvation; but He was not content. He desired to be our unceasing Sacrifice, our High Priest, our August Victim; and at every hour, at every moment, not merely to represent, or recall to our minds, but to renew and repeat, with a multitude of unheard-of prodigies, the great sacrifice of the Cross, in order

that, as this bloody sacrifice has been for us the source of all blessings, so the continual repetition of it may bestow upon us the same benefits.

What can I say of His union with us? Speaking to a tribe of savages of the goodness of our God, should I tell them that He went so far as to give Himself to us as food, to be identified with us; a smile of compassion would appear on those bronzed faces, and I should hear the protest once made to our Redeemer by His unfaithful followers: "This saying is hard, and who can hear it?" Yet we know that this union really takes place, and in a most ineffable manner, whenever we will it. Devout reader, please think on it for a moment. The Saints, when speaking of it, find no words equal to the task. St. Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, uses the comparison of two masses of wax melted and commingled; as, after this has been done, it is impossible for any one to restore them to their original individuality. Theodoret compares the same union to a piece of iron put into a furnace, where it is not distinguishable from the fire which surrounds it, after it has been subjected for a time to the intense heat. St. Augustine compares it to material food which transforms itself into the flesh and blood of him who eats it, so as to become inseparable from him. "Thus it hap-

pens," says he, "in this mystery, with this difference, however: that it is not we who change the divine food into our substance, but the divine food that changes us into its own." St. Thomas makes use of the simile of ingraftment: "As the wild tree," says he, "is transformed into the nature and quality of the good branch grafted into it; so we in this sacrament are transformed into Jesus, who, as the Scripture tells us, is *the ingrafted word*." But however lively and expressive these comparisons may be, they are inferior to that used by Christ Himself, and none would have ventured to use it if He had not vouchsafed to pronounce it: "As the Father who liveth sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same shall live by Me." (*John* vi. 58.) And this sentence gives us to understand that as the Son of God, on account of His eternal generation, receives, from His divine Father, being, life, and all the perfections, virtues, and works of God, so that by this generation the Son is the same God with the Father, lives in Him and through Him, is wise, good, holy, infinite, omnipotent as the Father is, has the same intellect and the same will, the same works, and everything in common with the Father; so also whoever receives Jesus Christ worthily in this divine Sacrament receives, in virtue of this

food, the being and the life of Christ by participation, His perfections and virtues, and conformity with Him in admitting, willing, and doing the same things. Hence, Jesus becomes a most powerful cause of all the works which he will perform; He becomes the prime mover of good works, urging men to be rich in them by His inspirations, and by the thought of that Being for whose glory they are performed; He becomes for the worthy recipient the model of all virtues, and the subject of all his words and affections, so that he may always live for Christ's sake, as did St. Paul, who did not know anything but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To these truths of our faith, I do not think it is necessary to add anything else to prove that the Holy Eucharist is a work *solely* and *entirely* of love. He who does not see it in the real presence, wherewith He honors us, in the most ineffable union which He wishes to effect with us, will not see it by any other means. Let us rather ask how men have corresponded to such love. Have they shown themselves anxious beyond measure to correspond? Have they been entirely captivated by such love? We shall see presently.

2. For more than ten centuries, no heretic was bold enough to attack the truth of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, so

great was the array of proofs, drawn from the sacred Scriptures; so irrefragable the tradition on which the truth of our belief is based. Only in these latter ages has audacity gone so far as to deny that Jesus was capable of such excessive love. Men were not satisfied; they not only forgot Him, inasmuch as they refused to believe in Him, but they have gone further. By an unexampled perfidy and an open contradiction, whilst denying the real presence, they take pleasure in heaping all manner of insults upon Him. The Albigenses used to rush like madmen into the churches, seize upon the sacred ciboria, and throw the consecrated hosts as food to their dogs and horses. The Huguenots in France broke down the altars, destroyed the sacred vessels, profaned the churches in a thousand ways, and scattered the consecrated species on the ramparts of the revolted cities, to prevent the Catholics from storming the walls. What outrages did not the republican armies that devastated Europe at the commencement of the present century commit against Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the altar? In Spain, the soldiers broke open the tabernacles, destroyed the ciboria with the hilts of their swords and the butt-ends of their muskets. What shall I say of those impious monsters, worse than their pre-

decessors, who have held sway in our days in many parts of Europe? These men are neither heretics nor Catholics, but a composite of unbelief, atheism, and diabolical superstition. Who can recall, without a chill of horror, the indignity which they offered to the Bread of Angels, and the infamous uses they made of it? All that the imagination can picture of outrage, wickedness, perfidy, sacrilege and satanic inventiveness, was realized in the actions of those wretches toward the adorable Sacrament. Some say that this accusation is an atrocious calumny. I know that the proofs are to be had — proofs obtained both from authentic processes and the confessions of the traitors themselves who were guilty of these abominable crimes. One would think that hatred for Christ could scarcely be carried to such an excess on this earth; henceforth, the world can boast that it has equalled the fury that animates the reprobate and the demons themselves.

3. But we need not go so far, for even among Christians who are not so perverse, ingratitude, indifference, and irreverence may be seen. All know that Jesus has carried His condescension to the utmost limit in this mystery. He might have granted to but one priest the power of consecrating His body and blood; He might have contented

Himself with being present in one temple only, and obliged all Christians, from all parts of the world, to go thither to adore Him, notwithstanding the embarrassment and difficulty in the way for those who lived in far distant countries; He might have appointed an hour of the day, or an hour of the year, for our admission to His presence. It would have been in truth an ineffable favor on the part of Jesus to hallow the world and the Church for a few moments by His august presence. He has done far otherwise. He has conferred upon a multitude of priests the power of causing Him to descend from heaven; He has chosen as many abodes on this earth as we have erected churches and chapels for Him; He remains there day and night; He allows Himself to be carried whithersoever we wish, and received in communion as often as we please; He gives Himself to persons the most abject; He enters the most humble dwellings; He withholds Himself not even from the guilty. What is the fruit of these wonderful and unheard-of condescensions? The immensity of His charity has met with an immensity of atrocious insults. “Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and ye gates thereof, be very desolate!” (*Jerem. ii. 12.*) Is it not in Christian churches that people are most hardened and insolent?

Many now-a-days do not scruple to carry on idle conversations, in these holy places, about the vanities and news of the time. To laugh there is a trifling matter; to keep an exact account of those who enter and leave the church, and turn our backs upon the Blessed Sacrament in order to further our investigations, is nothing; to assume an unbecoming posture in so great a presence is considered as something by no means reprehensible. Unfortunately, persons go to the house of God with the avowed intention of seeking a relaxation, a pastime which they might not find at home. There the fashionable are seen parading their vanity and luxury; there pride and immodesty are paraded; there the richest apparel, the latest fashions, and the most fantastic styles of dress are on exhibition. Young women even, whom modesty should restrain, are not ashamed of comporting themselves irreverently before the altars, and attracting, by their unbecoming manner, the attention of others; thus setting themselves up as idols in the presence of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as they endeavor to draw to themselves those who are adoring Him. I say nothing of the dregs of society, of those bad men who never enter a church, unless impelled by a wicked motive; you see them in their effrontery, with heads erect, their coun-

tenances haughty, and bearing the unmistakable marks of the vice that gnaws their hearts. These men put no restraint on their impiety even at the solemn moment of consecration. In some cities, certain churches, masses, and religious ceremonies are expressly chosen as places and times of meeting. What is thought about, what spoken or done during these interviews, Jesus only knows, being from the depths of the tabernacle the grieved witness of them. What of the offences committed at the time of the august sacrifice? How many have time for everything but the hearing of mass! How many are present at mass indevoutly, and when Jesus renews before their eyes His crucifixion and death, remain cold, indifferent, and insensible, without a single emotion of love towards Him, without a word of prayer to say to Him! Some there are, whom you could as easily persuade to take poison as to receive their God in the sacrament of His love, out of the paschal time. Some, again, disregard the excommunications hurled against those who do not communicate at Easter-time; others, worse than Judas, present themselves at the holy table after a bad confession, and give up Jesus Christ to His mortal enemy, the demon. Great God! what iniquities, what outrages against a God of love! St. Jerome could not find words

strong enough to express his execration of the wretch who profaned the grotto of Bethlehem by a sin. "Most miserable of men," exclaims he, "did you not fear that you might hear the cries of the divine Infant, or see the Mother of God? Oh! the Angels greet Him with heavenly music; the shepherds visit Him; the star shines forth in the heavens; the Magi adore; Herod is frightened; Jerusalem is in commotion; and you! how dare you yield to sin on this holy ground? Have not your eyes refused you their aid; has not your tongue lost its power; have not your arms become nerveless, your feet motionless, your heart pulseless? As for me, my tears flow more abundantly than my words. I am overcome less by indignation than grief." With the same fervent pathos he execrates the infamous deed of Julian the apostate, who endeavored to prevent the Christians from adoring our crucified Saviour, and would turn them away from Calvary by placing on that hallowed spot immodest statues of Venus and Cupid. But are not the insults heaped upon our Saviour in churches, more outrageous than those of the grotto of Bethlehem or of Mount Calvary? Are not churches hallowed by the presence of Jesus Christ? And more; for, whilst in these other places of which I have spoken, our Saviour remained but

a few days or a few hours, He remains in our churches always. Who then can understand the lively manner in which these outrages affect Him?

4. But this good Saviour complains most particularly of what He suffers at the hands of some chosen souls. "What affects me most," He said to His servant, Margaret Mary, "is that some hearts consecrated to Me treat Me so badly." And can we say that this class is composed of few persons? Are there not hearts consecrated to Him, the hearts of His ministers, His religious men and women, all of whom have received special favors from Him? Among these privileged souls, are there not many that displease Him? Do not these ministers condemn Him to inhabit places not in keeping with what they could do for Him? Do they not leave Him in dilapidated churches, on tottering altars, in neglected ciboria? Do they not treat Him, in a word, as they would not like to be treated? How do they offer Him to the adoration of the faithful? What care do they take of His ornaments, the linen of the altar? How are they vested in the exercise of the sacred functions? With what dignity and piety do they carry Him in procession? Alas! oftentimes they are the first to scandalize the faithful by the levity with which they ascend the altar, the unbecoming-

ness of their whole carriage, the hurriedness of their movements, the haste with which they perform the ceremonies! And how are their hearts disposed in the meantime? If there were a single Judas in the world who durst place his sacrilegious hands upon this adorable Body, and receive it into an impure heart, would any one be able to tell the horror of the Angels, the grief of the whole heavenly court, at seeing such an infamous act? And yet, how many sacrilegious hands touch this Body, how many impure hearts receive it!

And among religious, are there not many deplorable evils? Among those who are called to a perfect imitation of Jesus, whom holy vows have united to Him in a most intimate manner, who know well the claims He has to their love, are there no traitors? Among the virgins consecrated to Jesus Christ, are there not languid hearts, cold hearts, hearts as disloyal as those of His enemies? No one can or should know these secrets; but continually is Jesus affected by these outrages from hearts consecrated to Him—the most cruel, the greatest outrages He has to undergo. It is worthy of remark that Jesus, complaining by the mouth of His prophets, in the bitterness of His passion, never uses more energetic expressions than when He speaks of the treason of Judas, His own dis-

ciple, the first profaner of the holy table: "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it; . . . but that thou, a man of one mind, my guide and familiar, who didst take sweetmeats together with Me; in the house of God we walked with consent!" Ah! after so much familiarity I cannot endure such ingratitude! But is not this the case of a Christian, of a priest, of a religious, who, after having enjoyed these favors, after having been admitted to a share in these mysteries, after having received numberless caresses from the bounty of Jesus, shows only in return tepidity, indifference, and what is worse, perfidy? Words fail to express the poignant manner in which this treatment affects this divine Heart.

5. But these lamentations of the Saviour, and still more, the repeated outrages against Him, show still more clearly that he who undertakes, by the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to make reparation in some way to Him, has a sublime and holy task. To speak in brief, by the ardor which he manifests in the service of Jesus Christ he pays Him by a single act the homage of all the most perfect virtues; he shows Him the liveliness of his faith, since he not only believes in the real presence, but does everything to console Him; he shows the love he has for his neighbor, whose evils

so move him that he strives to remove or lessen them; he shows his zeal for the glory of God, since he cannot remain indifferent at the sight of so many offences; he shows his hatred of sin, since he cannot but hate it heartily when he burns with the desire of extirpating it entirely—above all, he shows his ardent charity, since such fervor cannot come from any other source.

This is not all. He acquits himself of a duty founded on reason, commanded by faith, imposed by charity. For, suppose even that Jesus were a stranger—an enemy, if you please—would not His sad condition be sufficient to excite our compassion? How shall we not be moved when we consider that He is the God of love? Is there a heart so hardened as not to oppose a bulwark to so many evils, when it knows how much He is outraged in this mystery, and thus make reparation for so many nefarious actions? Jesus will not be unmoved by this sentiment of a compassionate heart; for, faithfulness acquires a new reward, when all are faithless.

Jesus, in this mystery of love, is, with the greater portion of mankind, even with Christians, an object of neglect or contempt. Consequently, if He sees fervent souls separate themselves from the mass of mankind, take to heart His cause, share

His troubles, feel for the affronts He receives, and, as much as lies in their power, strive, by ardent vows, sincere protestations, and heartfelt homage, to make some amends for the ungenerous and outrageous actions of men, will not His Heart be pleased with this filial and whole-souled affection? If a prince, fallen from his high estate, finds in his degraded position a faithful servant, will he not, after regaining his throne, be lavish in his acknowledgments of this servant's fidelity? Jesus, though appearing to have lost His empire, is yet the King of kings: "Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages." (*Ps. cxliv. 13.*) He has still His magnificent Temple; He has angels to do Him service; He has thrones to distribute to His faithful servants. How, then, will He receive those who have served Him faithfully? And again, even here below, He bestows abundant graces on those who love Him. Will He not cherish in His Heart those especially who generously defend His cause? Will He not show them the abyss of His mercy? Will He not strengthen them in the practice of virtue? Will He not inebriate them with the torrent of His delights?

O Jesus, make those who peruse these pages worthy of such favors! I ask this of Thee for the glory of Thy divine Heart and the sanctification of their souls.

CHAPTER VII.

FIRST FRUIT OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART.

This Devotion gives us an intimate knowledge of the Divine Perfections — It gives us an insight into the mysteries of the Saviour's life — It gives a knowledge of the virtues of our Saviour — It causes us to love that which it teaches us.

THERE are two ways of arriving at the knowledge of an object: the consideration of it in itself, the consideration of it in its effects. The former shows us the nature, essence and character of the object; the latter strengthens the knowledge already acquired, and besides illustrates and develops it. Our divine Master instructs us to make use of the second way, when He tells us to judge the tree by its fruits: "by the fruit the tree is known; a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit." Thus far we have labored to show the excellence of the devotion to the Sacred Heart by considering it in itself; we shall now consider it in its effects, that is, in the fruits produced by it. Now, since these fruits have, independently of the sweetness

and unspeakable pleasure connected with them, the additional merit of immense utility, no one should remain indifferent toward them, but, on the contrary, rather say with the Spouse in the Canticles: "I sat down under his shadow, whom I desired: and his fruit was sweet to my palate." (*Cant.* ii. 3.) Let us commence with the first of these fruits — the intimate and perfect knowledge given us of our beloved Saviour.

1. No one can deny that the ignorance, which has such general sway, in regard to the mysteries of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, His virtues, and the riches we possess in Him, is the direful source of the innumerable evils that prevail in our age. To say nothing of the extravagant errors which corrupt the nations infected with heresy, to say nothing of the enormities among the incredulous and the licentious, we may assert that even among Christians "truths are decayed." The larger portion of Christians have a limited, or, at best, a superficial knowledge of the truths of revelation; they cannot give a satisfactory account of what they profess to believe. Content with this scanty insight into their faith, they make no endeavor to go farther and learn lessons which the divine Teacher would give them, nor the life that comes by faith. There is another class of Christians,

whose judgments are so perverted, that they find fault with what they should admire, and are scandalized by those things that ought to edify them; and thus Christ is for them a rock of scandal, according to the expression of the Prince of the Apostles. Since persons are thus disposed, it is no wonder that tepidity, irregularity, and wickedness are so common, and that charity has grown cold. No one can know Jesus, who does not know His life, His doctrine, His cross; were it otherwise, we should have cause for wonder.

This ignorance cannot be remedied by the study of a catechism. The example that Jesus has given us, His doctrine and His virtues, must be treasured up in our hearts; we must penetrate into His interior sentiments, and see the affections of His Heart. In ordinary intercourse with our fellow-men, we say that we know a man perfectly, when we know his interior sentiments. A son knows his father perfectly, because he knows his interior sentiments; the wife says she knows the heart of her husband, in order to indicate that she knows him perfectly. The Holy Spirit Himself, to show us how difficult a thing it is to have a complete knowledge of man, says that his "heart is unsearchable," so that no one can know man thoroughly, until he has searched into his heart. And

as this is admitted, the first advantage of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is manifest. By this means we attain that great knowledge, and, what is more, the knowledge which we acquire is not vague or superficial, but intimate and profound. May it please our good God to open for us this divine school, that we may there learn the truths that will suffice, not only for our salvation, but for rendering the way to eternal happiness smooth and agreeable. And what knowledge is indispensable for salvation? Our Saviour tells us: "Now this is eternal life: that they know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent." (*John* xvii. 3.) The knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ is then the science of eternal life, provided that this knowledge be not vain and speculative, but capable of enlightening the intelligence in the first place, then of inflaming the will, and urging on to good deeds. Now, this is precisely the case in regard to the Sacred Heart, but with this difference: that the knowledge obtained in the Sacred Heart by one who seriously considers it, cannot but be carried from rapture to rapture. Would you know what the divinity is? In this Heart are found all its treasures: here its omnipotence, its grandeur, its majesty, its wisdom, its goodness, in a word, all the divine perfections

are centred. Do you want a proof of the infinite power of God? In the beginning He made the heavens; He created the earth and the countless and varied beings that dwell on it; and by a simple act of His will He could annihilate everything. You see from this fact that His power is infinite and wonderful. Yet you will have a much grander idea of His power when you know that He has formed a Heart so rich in gifts and so sublime in prerogatives, that the person of the Word has deigned to make it His own Heart. Would you understand the infinite wisdom of God? Look around you, and you will be struck by the truth of those words of the wise man: "thou hast made all things in wisdom." But if you wish to descend into the very depths of this wisdom, fix your eyes on the Heart of Jesus, and you will wonder at the baseness of man being united, by the effect of an unspeakable miracle, to the incomparable sublimity of God. There you will see how the mercy of the Lord, who is always ready to succor us in every misfortune, condescends now, thanks to this Heart, to be moved to compassion at the sight of our miseries: there you will understand what honor, what love the Lord deserves, since there was need of the Heart of a God to adore and love Him, man's homage being unequal to the task.

Where does His goodness appear more prominently than in the gift which He has made of His Heart? The faithful soul finds all the wonders of the Divinity centred in the Heart of Jesus.

2. Where do the mysteries of the life of the Saviour, which are the support, or rather the substantial manna, that the faithful need for their continual nourishment, shine forth more brilliantly than in the Sacred Heart? Where do these mysteries assume more amiable and salutary qualities? In that Heart they have their source; here they obtain their splendor. Who can meditate on the mysteries of an Infant-God without being moved? A God is subject to our miseries: He weeps, suffers from hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness — an excess of humiliation and self-torture. But is there not upon all these manifestations of His sufferings and humiliation the impress of this adorable Heart, the instrument and cause of so many prodigies? That a God is at one time a fugitive, at another hidden from the sight of men, at another an artizan in an humble workshop, is a great mystery; but who can comprehend it properly, without, at the same time, comprehending the meekness, the peace, the unalterable tranquillity of this Heart in the midst of abandonment, and in the unbroken solitude of an humble and hidden life? Jesus goes from

hamlet to hamlet, sowing the seed of eternal life, curing the sick, freeing the possessed, driving away the demons, establishing His Church, putting everything in order for our salvation. This is a spectacle worthy of our admiration: and yet a great deal would escape our attention, if we did not consider this immense Heart whence proceeded so many marvellous works; for this Heart sympathized with our miseries; this Heart applied a remedy to our evils; this Heart was so touched by our misfortunes, that it wept over them, and by those very tears consoled us in our affliction; this Heart opens for us the sacred path of Penance, prepares for us the Eucharistic bread. Every good has its beginning in this Heart, whence it flows as from a fountain and receives all its force. It is not my intention to dwell upon the ineffable mysteries of the passion, agony and death of Jesus Christ. These mysteries assume a most resplendent guise when contemplated in this Heart; they show us the principle on which they are based, the ardor of Jesus for sufferings, the perfection with which He endured them, and the end for which they were endured — our own happiness. I shall not say anything of the different phases of our Saviour's love for us, though all His love borrows its power from this Heart. There is in Jesus the

affection of a father, the devotedness of a brother, the love of a spouse, the vigilance of a pastor, the solicitude of a physician, the familiarity of a friend, the endearment of a lover; but how can we persuade ourselves of these truths without recurring to this Heart, and studying there the profound and hidden reasons for our Saviour's acting thus in our regard? Who will not be carried away with admiration and love, when Jesus shall have given him the knowledge of these mysteries? Is it not true then that in this devotion we obtain the most thorough and intimate knowledge of Jesus?

3. The knowledge of the mysteries of the Saviour is followed by that of His virtues — virtues so enticing, so divine, that they are the strength and beauty of the Church, and crown her with an aureola of splendor. How are these virtues, whose perfume attracts a multitude of generous and chosen souls, known by a large number of Christians? Who can form a correct idea of the poverty, obedience, purity, modesty, detachment from the earth, and love of heavenly things; or estimate properly the love of God and of mankind that burned in the Heart of Jesus? If these are not known, they cannot be practised or imitated. And without imitation of them, how can we obtain

eternal life? "For, whom God foreknew," says St. Paul, "He predestinated to be conformable to the image of His Son." We see the necessity of this help to know the Saviour, but, at the same time, we must observe how excellently the Sacred Heart assists us in the acquisition of this knowledge. Now, where are these virtues found in their perfection, if not in their source—this Heart? One cannot comprehend the value of a charitable action, of good counsel, of uprightness of intention, of an act of patience, of any good deed, so long as he has not considered the sentiment that inspires it. Hence it is that the Saviour speaks so frequently of the heart. He weighs our good works by the uprightness of our intention, as He reproofs and condemns them by reason of the malice of our hearts. It is evident then that from this sanctuary there ascends to God the incense of the purest virtues. And is this not true likewise of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Do we not discover there the origin and value, the extent and perfection of His divine virtues? Is not His Heart the school where these virtues are taught?

What, then, of His interior affections, that other abyss of marvels and sanctity? His exterior actions are but an imperfect reflex of His interior; and yet, imperfect as this reflex is, it has had great

effect upon chosen souls. St. Teresa was wonderfully touched whilst considering the charity of the divine Master, who attracted first, and then received kindly the Samaritan woman at the well of Sichem. St. Peter Chrysologus, speaking of the cure of the woman who touched the hem of our Saviour's garment, was so much moved, and aroused his audience to such a pitch of excitement, that they gave vent to their feelings in tears and sobs. In truth, we cannot understand, even imperfectly, the sentiments that actuate our divine Saviour, without being moved by them. Have you ever considered Jesus under the form of the Good Shepherd, caressing the lost sheep, and not been touched by His tender solicitude? Have you contemplated Him pardoning the adulterous woman, or consoling the widow of Naim, or winning to Himself the penitent Magdalen, or entering the house of Zaccheus, or curing the sick, or instructing the ignorant, or weeping over the death of Lazarus, without being rapt in admiration at the sight of a God so compassionate? When you dwelt upon the beautiful parable of the prodigal son, returning to the bosom of his father, your tears were mingled with those of the repentant sinner: for, it is impossible for a heart to resist so many shafts of divine love. And what we say of

the mercy and tenderness of Jesus, is equally applicable to His love of justice, His zeal for our salvation, His compassion for our misfortunes, and His immense love of His heavenly Father. Ah! any one of these affections, though ever so little known, will be sufficient to effect the conquest of a heart, and unite it to Jesus by the bonds of eternal love.

If we can enjoy the touching spectacle of these pure, holy, enticing sentiments, concentrated in one point, and comprehend these secrets, admire their extent, penetrate thoroughly their sweetness, strength, and beauty, will not our progress in the knowledge of Jesus be pre-eminent? Will not our estimation and love of Jesus be proportionably great? We may then say with holy audacity: I know the interior sentiments of my Jesus; I know how His pure affections are marked by desire and zeal, love and hatred, fear and hope, in our regard, because I know His sentiments perfectly. This much we can say in all justice; but thanks be to God, we are not obliged to sigh as if this good were far from us; for, Jesus has revealed it to us, and placed it before our eyes in His divine Heart. He who seeks this important knowledge in the Sacred Heart, seeks it at its fountain-head, and cannot but obtain it. He can meditate on the sentiments of the Saviour, penetrate them, enjoy them

as long as he pleases, and love and glorify them continually. May this Heart give us the grace of yielding ourselves up to this divine science, as it has been pleased to show us what it is. And we shall no longer sigh after the trifles of this world, when we have once helped ourselves abundantly to these infinite riches.

4. The knowledge acquired by this devotion of the mysteries and virtues of the Saviour has another quality, inasmuch as it is not speculative, but persuasive in its character. It enlightens the mind, inflames the heart, and infuses an unction into all our labors. Indeed, even with divine things, there are grades of knowledge. There is a knowledge that stops with the understanding, contents itself with speculation, and, far from inflaming our hearts, touches them but to fill them with pride, according to the Apostle: "Knowledge puffeth up." Again, there is a knowledge called wisdom, or, as St. Bernard has it, wise knowledge, a knowledge that gives savor and relish for God and the things of God, a knowledge that imparts to us a proper idea of our Lord, of His attributes, His mysteries, His sufferings for us, of what He has done and will do in our regard; a knowledge that satisfies the intellect, whilst it engenders in the heart a love for the objects it presents to our consideration. Now, this knowledge, which is that of

the Saints, the principle and end of sanctity, is amply obtained by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

As we have shown, the object of this knowledge is to become familiar with the virtues, merits, the interior even of Jesus Christ, and this is the most sublime object that can be proposed to men and Angels. As to the manner, heavenly things are learnt in this divine Heart more by means of love than of knowledge, more by sentiment than by reasoning; and the heart that loves these things and enters thoroughly into them, anticipates the light that makes it capable of receiving knowledge, or, in other words, needs not the assistance of the intellect. Finally, this knowledge does not dry up the soul; it has a contrary effect. It does not render the soul sterile, but enriches it; it does not distract the soul, but makes it recollected; and, far from puffing up the soul with pride, it fills it with compunction and humility, producing those wonders that astound us so often in the Church, where we see persons, ignorant of human sciences, show more knowledge of heavenly things than the greatest theologians; as was the case with a Pascal Baylon, and an Alphonsus Rodriguez; where even simple women explain, with the greatest ease, the mysteries of the interior life, as we read of a Catharine of Sienna, and a Teresa of Jesus. A

light shines upon us; it is the light of Truth. An affection is aroused in our hearts; it comes from the true source of all affections, Jesus Christ. And who can tell the advantages of such a knowledge, especially in our days, in which an arid profane knowledge has dried up, like a torrid wind, every source of true science, and misled rather than enlightened a multitude of intellects? All that we can say is summed up in this, that as no deep convictions, (as the world now expresses itself,) nor progress in science, nor discoveries, nor the course of ages, nor the excessive vanity of men, will form a heart truly good and just; so there will never be a treasure more precious than this knowledge, which is both knowledge and love. May it please God that men may go to drink at the living fount of the Heart of Jesus! May this Heart be to them the fountain of eternal life. As for you, pious reader, who have had the good fortune to discover this salutary fountain, go to it often, in order to quench your thirst, to be satiated, inebriated with these holy waters: "Drink and be inebriated, my dearly beloved." (*Cant.* v. 1.) The knowledge of this world shall be made void; the knowledge which you shall have obtained from the devotion to the Sacred Heart will, on the contrary, receive its fulness, its perfection, on the day that you contemplate our Lord face to face.

CHAPTER VIII.

SECOND FRUIT OF THE DEVOTION — LOVE OF JESUS.

Excellence of the love of Jesus — Jesus has promised to restore it by means of this Devotion — Various ways in which this love may be restored by the Devotion — Efficacy of the Devotion in this regard.

IF the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus enables us to know more perfectly the adorable person of our Saviour, His affections, His virtues, and His merits, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that our love of Jesus must be proportionably increased. If this were not the case, we might say that intimate knowledge is not accompanied by love. The Holy Scriptures suppose so close a connection between intimate knowledge and corresponding love, that they always speak of them as two things mutually interwoven: "This is eternal life: that they know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." (*John xvii. 3.*) And how can there be life without love, since St. John teaches that "he who loveth not, abideth in death?" It is therefore evident, that true knowledge is inseparable from love: the latter is a natural effect of the former. However, as love

of Jesus is the most precious fruit gathered from the devotion to the Sacred Heart, as it was this fruit our Saviour had principally in view whilst establishing this devotion, we may profitably consider the value of it, and see how easily it may be obtained, in order that, in the first place, we may earnestly desire it, and in the second, strive to procure it.

1. From the first moment of man's existence on this earth, he was under the obligation of loving God ; and before the great precept, which ordains this love, was announced on Sinai, it was engraven by the hand of the Creator on the hearts of all men. Thus, all the just men of the old law, all the Saints, all the elect practised this love. Under the new law, however, to gain man's heart more effectually, or on account of the great abundance of graces given to men, or for other reasons, God wishes that the love we owe Him be more affectionate and generous ; and thus the new law is called the law of love. "I am come to cast fire upon the earth," said Jesus Christ, "and what do I wish but that it be kindled?" (*Luke xii. 49.*) This is the first and the greatest commandment. It is the greatest, according to the explanation of the holy doctors, on account of its extent ; since charity embraces all the other commandments ; it

is the greatest in riches, "because," as St. Augustine remarks, "he that has charity, has God;" it is the greatest in merits, as without charity we can have no right to grace or glory: "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor," says St. Paul, "and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 *Cor.* xiii. 3.) It is the greatest in nobility, for it makes us the children of God: "every one who loveth, is born of God;" (1 *John* iv. 7;) it is the greatest in strength; for, "love is as strong as death," and wherever it has sway, the soul is joined to the Lord as one spirit; it is the greatest in its victories, for nothing can withstand charity, "as, having triumphed with God, it triumphs easily with the Saints," says St. Bernard; it is greatest in its dominion — it has sway over all; in its flight, because it transcends everything; in its power, it conquers everywhere; it is the greatest in patience, as it is never weary; in ease, because it is all sweetness; in importance, because it is the end of all. In a word, he who loves ardently, fulfils the law; "he who loveth the neighbor, hath fulfilled the law," and "love is the fulfilling of the law." (1 *Cor.* xiii.) Now, this love which Jesus established on earth, and which, according to His wish, should move every heart, does undoubtedly

captivate the affections of a great many; and these give consolation to the divine Saviour. This fact is undeniable, otherwise we should be forced to assert that our own experience had not instructed us, and that the blood of Christ had been shed in vain; still, it is equally true that very many persons are lukewarm, cold, dead to heavenly charity. And this sad state of things is easily perceptible, since this salutary love, far from increasing, seems to grow cold in the course of time, conformably to the words of the Scripture: "The charity of many will grow cold." (*Matt. xxiv. 12.*) What is the remedy for this evil? Jesus promised, many centuries ago, to St. Gertrude, and more recently to His spouse, Blessed Margaret, to give a remedy in every respect suited to our necessities. He told St. Gertrude that He reserved the devotion to the Sacred Heart for these later ages, as a means of arousing this love, nearly extinct in the hearts of very many Christians. He informed Blessed Margaret, on a thousand occasions, that this means would make the coldest hearts burn with love. He would, to speak more to the point, by the help of this devotion, deliver us from the most dreadful dangers that man has to encounter; and grant us the highest good that we can aspire to. Let us consider, then, the various ways in which this happy result may be effected.

2. Divine love has this excellent property—one and the self-same thing, it produces a thousand different effects; and, according to the diversity of these effects, assumes various titles. For example, does a person, by an act of the will, resolve, for the love of Jesus, to rise above all created things? This affection is called love of preference. If He desires to bestow on the object beloved all the goods which He may possess, this love is called benevolence. Love, founded on friendship, presupposes, independently of a union of hearts, a communication of goods. When love is founded on the qualities of the person loved, on the goods he possesses, it is called the love of complacency; and when this love is considered as the source of one's own riches, it takes the name of gratitude. Sometimes a generous sentiment urges the lover to portray in himself the qualities of the object loved—this is the love of resemblance; at other times the same sentiment dilates the heart and renders access to Jesus easy; this is the love of confidence. Sorrow for sin is manifested, and this effect of love is called penitence: the lover rises on the wings of his affections, and longs to be transformed into his beloved: this is love of union. Love, to say all in one word, is like a flame; it appropriates and assimilates to itself everything it

touches, and though it comes in contact with a thousand different objects, it is always love. Now, this very quality in the devotion to the Sacred Heart, causes us to admire it. Indeed, is it not true that, if there existed a means of exciting the flames of divine love in the hearts of all men, and of keeping them aglow continually, we should consider that means most effectual for arriving at perfection and Christian sanctity? But this means is a natural effect of the devotion, as our Saviour Himself has assured us. Let us examine the matter.

The love absolutely necessary for all Christians is that of preference—thus the theologians style it—by which the faithful soul is ready to lose everything it holds dear in this world, to endure all manner of sufferings, rather than lose Jesus. This love is founded on a just and exact idea of God, the Sovereign Good, of the titles that He has to our love, and the absolute obedience we owe Him. Is there any object better calculated to excite this love than the Sacred Heart of Jesus? It is the Heart of the Word, as we have shown elsewhere, the instrument of the Divinity; it possesses all the qualities, prerogatives, divine and human perfections of Jesus Christ; it represents the great work of redemption; in a word, it ex-

hibits all the powerful motives for our esteem and affectionate regard. Love, characterized by kindness of affection, is not absolutely necessary, since this quality may come from natural sensibility; or from some other cause equally natural. It is proper, however, to love Jesus in all possible ways; and there is no better means of giving variety to the expression of our love than by practising the devotion to the Sacred Heart. The love of preference, united with sensible love, easily engenders benevolence, or, in other words, it excites that ardent desire of seeing Jesus receive the only good man can bestow on Him, extrinsic glory, which consists in being known and loved: it gives rise to complacency—the satisfaction we derive from considering the qualities He has, and the honors He receives. But this benevolence and complacency borrow great succors and incitements from this adorable Heart, the object of complacency for the Angels, and the Saints, for the whole heavenly court, and what is more, for the august Trinity that has enriched it with so many treasures. Confidence is wonderfully excited by this divine Heart, since it discards motives of fear, and furnishes only such as beget encouragement. The love of resemblance finds in this devotion its stimulus, since nothing is sweeter than the imita-

tion of a Heart which loves us, and which we love in turn. Penitence, founded on love, gives an outward expression to its emotions by means of tears and sighs, but where will it find sweeter tears and more ardent sighs than in this Heart, the living witness of what our sins have cost a God? I say nothing of compassion, another fruit of love; there is no person that does not read in this Heart ardent and sensible proofs of the passion, death, and atrocious torments endured by the Man of Sorrows. The most perfect souls aim chiefly at that love which unites them intimately with their Beloved; but where will they find chains more lovable and bonds of greater strength than in this divine Heart, which lives only a life of love? In brief, this Heart has been chosen as an instrument to excite charity among the unfortunate children of Adam; and whoever makes use of it, is sure of experiencing the happiest results. And more, what is truly wonderful, as the dispositions of persons, even in exercises of piety, are different, some being pleased with one thing, some with another, Jesus has adapted the motives to the inclination of each individual, and at the same time has regarded the end in view — love of Himself.

3. The Heart of Jesus is not only capable of

producing this great variety of affections, but it produces them in an ineffable manner and with divine efficacy ; so that we may say that Jesus is not content with inciting and alluring us, but He even constrains us to enter His service : “ The love of Christ,” says the Apostle, writing to the Corinthians, “ constraineth us.” The love of Christ urges us on by instructing our will, by giving some satisfaction even to our senses, by withdrawing us from what may separate us from Him, and by granting us everything that may facilitate our intercourse with Him.

Why does profane love exercise so great an influence on our miserable hearts ? Because it uses material objects, that appeal to our senses, in order to excite our passion. Assisted by these perishable things, it leads the soul captive, and so arouses its affections, that it is consumed by an inextinguishable fire. Jesus, by means of His adorable Heart, renders Himself perceptible to the imagination, and exercises His divine influence on the senses, but with this difference, that whilst the flames of profane love too often sully, degrade, and utterly ruin the heart, the flames of this celestial love purify, ennoble, and raise it up to heaven. Why does the beauty of material objects fascinate us to so great an extent ? Why do the charms that others

possess captivate our minds? Because they keep artfully from our gaze their vanity and uncomeliness; they place before us nothing but their seductive forms. The Heart of Jesus, without endeavoring to ensnare our imaginations or deceive our senses, shows us our divine Saviour under an aspect infinitely lovable. It puts us in mind of His goodness, His sweetness, His amiability, His generosity, His meekness, His humility, His condescension, His numberless perfections, and urges us by this consideration to give love for love. Why has worldly love such power over the heart? Because with the object loved, there is no quarrel, dispute nor contentions, which are the bane of friendship; all gives place to a sweet correspondence of affections that enchant the soul. How infinitely superior is that which is accomplished by the Heart of Jesus, whose sweetness removes everything that might diminish and cool—I do not say distract—our love of Him. If these motives are insufficient to triumph over our hearts and to subjugate them entirely; if other incitements and charms are needed to attract us to the love of Jesus, rest assured that this adorable Heart has very many others with which to allure us. Are our hearts ravished by virtues of the most exalted character? In this Heart we possess all

human virtues united with the divine perfections. Does utility or interest hold sway in our hearts? We find in this Heart all kinds of blessings, ready to be abundantly showered on us according to our desire. Do we need amiable, affectionate, august titles to excite the flames of holy love? St. Bernard will teach us that this Heart is the heart of a king in generosity, the heart of a brother in devotedness, the heart of a friend in intimacy. This great Saint, who learned these things in the sacred Canticles, will tell you that this Heart surpasses in tenderness of affection the love of a spouse for her beloved. Jesus has given us other titles: He is the good Shepherd, who guards and pastures His flock, and His Heart is all solicitude for its welfare. He is the compassionate Physician, who is ready to cure our infirmities, giving us His Heart as an efficacious remedy for all the ills that beset us. He is the good Samaritan; He comforts the unfortunate who lie wounded and bleeding by the way side. In a word, His Heart is equal to any kind of need that we may experience. Is not this enough? Must our Saviour touch our hearts still more sensibly, penetrate to their inmost recesses, in order to gain our love? Well, remain insensible, if you can, at the sight of this Heart. A Heart exposed to our view, transpierced, sur-

rounded by thorns, in the midst of flames, is certainly capable of arousing our affections, exciting our compassion and gratitude, and eliciting our most tender love. Why then should not the Sacred Heart, which has done so much for us, produce the same effects in us?



CHAPTER IX.

THIRD FRUIT OF THE DEVOTION—IMITATION OF
THE VIRTUES OF JESUS CHRIST.

The effect of beholding the virtues of Jesus Christ in their seat, His divine Heart, is the love of virtue—The love of Jesus excites in us the desire of imitating His divine Heart—Jesus in the Sacrament of His love is the model of every virtue.

JESUS is not only the Redeemer of mankind by reason of the blood that He shed for their salvation, He is also the Preceptor given us by the Almighty, to show us the way that leads to heaven. For forty centuries did the world sigh for this divine Teacher; and before He came upon this earth, the greater part of the nations, plunged in the darkness of ignorance, abandoned themselves to the most enormous errors. In the fulness of time, when, according to the prophecies, our eyes were to see the Teacher come from on high, and all men were to hear the voice of God, the divine Master appeared and preached the doctrine He had learned amidst the splendors of His Father's bosom: "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared

Him." (*John* i. 18.) He enlightened those who were sitting in the shadow of death ; and all who wished to be guided by this brilliant beacon gained the haven of safety. But this divine Teacher was not content with performing His duty for the few years of His mortal life, and with forming, by word as well as by His example, an authority which should perpetuate His mission to the latest posterity ; He wished to remain continually in the midst of the faithful, and, if we may use the expression, to keep constantly open a school of perfection and sanctity. This He has done in the Sacrament of His love by means of the Sacred Heart, which, independently of so many other prerogatives, is also the strongest incentive and the most cogent example that can influence a soul in the practice of the sublime virtues of the Christian religion. As this view of our Saviour's teachings is of sovereign utility for those who aspire to a perfect devotion to the Sacred Heart, and is calculated to enhance the glory of Jesus Christ, we shall say more upon this head.

1. If intimate knowledge and fervent love of Jesus Christ are, as we have seen already, the precious fruits of this devotion, surely we shall not be wanting in the imitation of our Saviour, if we are the clients of the Sacred Heart. For, to know

Jesus intimately, is to know His interior, and to know this divine interior, is to be struck by the infinite treasures of excellence, dignity, graces, and merits which belong to it, and, above all, by the brilliant light of His virtues ; in other words, to be thus moved, is to lay the most solid foundation of a perfect imitation of this adorable model.

But, apart from this consideration, where have the virtues worthy of this name their seat, if not in the heart? Acts and exterior exercises, however important they may be, do not deserve the name of virtue, and are deprived of their value if they are not the product of the will, if they are not inspired by it. The heart strives after virtue, the heart directs, the heart bears the burden. Penitence, for example, is a virtue, not so much because it afflicts the body, as because it afflicts the heart, and makes it an expiatory victim in the sight of God. Humility, patience, abnegation, sweetness, mildness, charity, are not virtues, because they regulate our movements, or compose our exterior, or induce us to humble ourselves before men, or even to do them some service ; these exterior acts are virtues only inasmuch as they are interiorly formed and directed by the heart. And this is so incontestable, that from the moment it is manifest by sure proofs that the sentiments of the

heart do not correspond to these outward expressions, far from calling such conduct virtuous, we condemn it as duplicity, pretence, and hypocrisy: an evident sign that we consider the heart the seat of virtue.

We should argue in the same manner, when we turn our minds to the difficulties that beset the path of virtue. "Virtue is hard to practise," says St. Gregory, and experience teaches us this truth continually; but in what does this toil, this difficulty really consist? In the necessity of refusing the heart the gratification of its desires, and of compelling it to embrace what it dislikes. If you do not act in this manner, you will soon have, instead of virtues, a number of hideous vices. The ancient philosophers, according to the testimony of the Apostle, abandoning themselves to the lusts of their hearts, were defiled by every manner of uncleanness: "God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts, to uncleanness." Again, eternal Wisdom teaches us that all vices are from the heart: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies." It is evident, then, that the heart is the seat of the vices as well as of the virtues, since it gives life to both. Now, this being the case, should not he, who approaches the Heart

of Jesus to obtain the virtues, derive the greatest advantage from it? Indeed, he approaches the pure source from which all virtues flow, the furnace where they are purified, the abyss that encloses them all, the treasury that contains the intimate and essential motives of each ; and as he learns by this intercourse to know them better, he cannot but love them more ardently. Plato said that the person who would contemplate the ineffable charms of virtue would be infatuated by them ; what should not be our rapture at contemplating these virtues in the brightness of this divine light?

2. Let us now enter upon a consideration which naturally follows the preceding one. To imitate is always easier than to take the initiative, either because we are convinced of the possibility of doing what has been done by others, or for other reasons, which philosophers mention. But to imitate an amiable object, to imitate a beloved object, is a thousand times more easy and agreeable. In truth, an amiable object presents itself under so many charming aspects, that the will is naturally drawn to assimilate itself to it.

If the object is not only lovable but also beloved, it subjugates our will, fires it, and disposes it to surmount every difficulty, in order to imitate it.

Love not only aspires to resemblance, it wishes to be identified with the beloved object, and of two beings to make one; "Love is a bond that unites, or tends to unite two beings," says the eloquent St. Augustine. This explains how it was that the Saints loved Jesus so ardently, and made so many efforts to be like Him, to adopt His maxims, His doctrines, and His example. The love they had for Him allowed them no repose, so long as they were not perfect imitators of Him. They saw Him humbled and trodden under foot, like a worm of the earth, and as they loved Him, they desired, with St. John of the Cross, to suffer and to be despised for His sake: "to suffer and be despised for thee." They saw Him undergoing the hardships of the most abject poverty, and, since they loved Him, they rejoiced with St. Francis in the midst of the greatest privations. They saw Him buffeted, crowned with thorns, and they cried out with Saint Bonaventure: "I will not be without wounds, my Saviour, when I see Thee covered with them;" and if their bodies were not torn by the malice of men, they exercised toward themselves a holy cruelty. They saw Him agonizing on the Cross, heaving His last sigh amidst the most atrocious torments, and they exclaimed, with St. Andrew: "Hail, precious cross, which has

been consecrated by the body of the Lord. I come to thee exulting with great joy and gladness; receive me now to thy embraces. O good cross, which hast drawn beauty from the body of my Redeemer, how ardently have I loved thee; how long have I desired and sought thee. At length I have found thee, waiting to receive my longing soul. Take and snatch me from among mortals, and present me to my master; that He who redeemed me on thee, may receive me at thy hands." This ardent desire of imitation was purely the work of love.

Now, this is the profound secret, the precious fruit of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. As this devotion gives not only the sparks, but kindles the bright flames of this heavenly fire, it cannot fail to excite us likewise to imitation. Who would not humble himself, though he loved this humble Heart ever so little? Who would not suffer something, whilst loving a Heart that has suffered so much? Who will not love his neighbor, when he sees that he is so tenderly loved by this divine Heart? In a word, all our affections must become as lively as those of the most devoted lovers; our tastes, our inclinations, our desires, must be similar to the tastes, the inclinations, the desires of the person loved. What might naturally hinder us

from imitating another, cannot have place in this holy love; for, love is not burdensome, nor irksome, and it is not cast down by the difficulties in the way. "He who loves, is never weary," says St. Augustine; and St. Bernard, going farther, found that difficulties not only vanished before him that loves, but were changed into sweet delights; "where there is love, labor is changed into sweet delights."* Finally, Christian virtues have, in this divine Heart, the strongest motives, the most efficacious examples, the sweetest attractions, the noblest objects of emulation, the most powerful arms to overturn the obstacles which prevent their practice; and thus we find it more agreeable to embrace them. It is, perhaps, for this reason that the divine Master, wishing to make us relish humility, the foundation of the Christian life, and to attach us to meekness, the buckler impervious to the most furious assaults of our passions, invites us kindly to His adorable Heart: "Come to Me, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." (*Matt.* xi. 29.) He wished to raise on high this flaming beacon, in order that we might henceforth know where the virtues have their seat and where they must be sought for.

* St. Bernard, sermon 85, sup. Cant.

3. I said, at the commencement of this chapter, that Jesus was not only the model of all virtues during His mortal life, but that He does not cease to be so in the mystical life which He leads in our midst in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. This consideration should be maturely reflected on, for I know of nothing that can give more consolation to the Christian soul than the thought of having so good a Master always near her. There are three different states in the life of our Saviour: upon this earth He was passible and mortal, having deigned, by an infinite condescension, to load Himself with our infirmities; now He reigns immortal and glorious in heaven, "for death shall no more have dominion over Him;" finally, there is a third state, His presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Here, He is all glorious, as in heaven, and moreover, after a manner of existence which is peculiar to Him, He places before us all His divine virtues. In heaven, Jesus is present after the manner of a glorified body; in the Sacrament His existence is entirely supernatural and miraculous, according to the remark of Bellarmine: "The body of Christ exists in heaven in a natural manner; in the sacrament after a manner not natural, but sacramental."* In heaven, Jesus occupies a

* Bellarm. De Sac. Euch., L. I, c. 2.

place, fills up space, has dimension, is an object of the senses, whose beatitude He is; in the Sacrament, though He has extension in Himself, He has it not in regard to place, and cannot be measured or circumscribed. In heaven, He has all the actions and movements proper to bodies; in the Sacrament, though having a body, He exists in a spiritual manner. In heaven, He is the master of His actions, and transports Himself whithersoever He chooses; here, He is bound as a prisoner of love under the sacramental species, unable to leave, or cease to be present, as long as they remain undestroyed or uncorrupted. In heaven, He is entire in one place; in the Sacrament, He is entire under each of the particles into which the species are divided.

On account of this marvellous manner of existence in the Eucharist, we attribute to Him properties apparently contrary. Whoever seeks in Him the life and ordinary actions of men on this earth, or of the Blessed in heaven, will be disappointed; though in reality, He has a life and most perfect actions, which, however, are exercised in a supernatural and wonderful manner. Jesus does not see, does not hear, does not breathe, does not move as we do; He is not a pagan god, but performs all these things in a way proper to this mystery. Here,

He dies a mystical death ; this sacrament being a memorial of the passion, Jesus represents continually on the altar that bloody death which he underwent but once on Calvary ; yet He is living and glorious, inasmuch as He communicates to others the life of soul and body, a life that surpasses everything in excellence, as it is divine, that is, unlimited in duration, because it is eternal : “ He that eateth Me, the same shall also live by Me. He who eateth this bread shall live forever.” (*John* vi. 58, 59.) Here, He is both the victim immolated continually for our sins, and the God who receives the holocaust of so august a victim. Wonderful prodigies of love, which, causing us to enjoy Jesus, our heavenly lover, during the course of ages, show Him to us in the actual exercise of all these virtues ! In the midst of humiliations, He is infinitely happy. As to the glory which He here enjoys, if you regard essential, intrinsic glory, it is the same that surrounds Him in heaven ; for His holy soul enjoys the beatific vision from which arises the plenitude of glory that attends His body ; if you regard accidental glory, that which He receives is the grandest that this world can give, since nearly all the ceremonies of the Church, as Scotus remarks, have reference to Jesus Christ in the most blessed Sacrament. And if, after this,

you consider the abasement in which He is, the mystery will appear more astounding. For if, in the Incarnation, the first abyss of humiliation, He hid His divinity under the form of a servant, here in this most profound abyss, He hides even the form of a servant under the appearances of a little wine and a little bread: "On the cross, the Deity alone was hidden, but in this sacrament, Deity and Humanity are obscured." * However, His life is all action, though entirely hidden and solitary. Were you to regard only appearances, you would not see here any indication of majesty, not a single ray of glory which renders Him conspicuous; and still He does not cease to work, as He is vigilant for the interest of His divine Heart, draws souls to Himself, nourishes them, instructs them, strengthens them, purifies them, showers upon them the abundance of His graces, until they are inebriated with holy love. The same may be said of all His other virtues. His charity was shown with divine splendor, when he took upon Himself human nature and clothed Himself with our sins; but in this Sacrament it appears preëminent, since He gives Himself to each individual. There was needed wonderful patience to support, for thirty

* St. Thomas.

long years, His poignant sufferings unto death, even the death of the cross ; but here this patience will be exposed, until time is no more, to the ingratitude of bad Christians, to the infidelities of heretics, to the insults, outrages, and contempt of the enemies of the blessed Sacrament. We must say the same of His zeal for the glory of His Father, that zeal which burns with so much ardor, since it never ceases to adore God, to thank, to supplicate Him, to appease His justice in our favor. It is the same with His obedience, since He is at the absolute disposal of His ministers, to be consecrated, given to the faithful, carried from place to place. I say nothing of His detachment from the grandeur of this earth, which so thoroughly fascinates our minds, since He dwells as willingly upon the humblest altars as in the most gorgeous temples, and enters as readily the huts of the poor as the palaces of the rich. I say nothing of His other virtues, for it would be an undertaking of interminable duration to pass in review all His virtues, and to consider the merits of each. I content myself with one observation ; as these virtues have their seat in the divine Heart, we must contemplate them there, if we wish to have a just estimate of the perfections of our God in the Sacrament of His love.

Indeed, during His mortal life, these virtues were manifested by an infinity of sensible signs; to the interior acts of the Heart was joined His adorable body, sometimes prostrated by hunger, sometimes wearied by long journeys, sometimes torn by blows, finally pierced and nailed to the cross; but now, as His body is glorified, everything is consummated in the secrecy of His Heart, where love and the practice of so many virtues have sway. It was, perhaps, for this reason that Jesus Himself inspired His servant, Blessed Margaret, as a means of glorifying His divine Heart, to cause the various manners of life to be honored which He lives in the blessed Sacrament: the life of love, the life of glory, the hidden life, the life of sacrifice, the life of grace, the humble life, the active life, the life of perfection. That is, He wished us to find all the virtues concentrated in His Heart, in order that it might be less unbecomingly treated. But, if this is so, what a vast and fertile field is placed before the fervent servants of Jesus! You desire ardently to know how you may testify your love for Him, and advance His glory. Study the ineffable treasures of virtues contained in His Heart; meditate on their excellence and perfection; then endeavor to portray them in yourself. Any number of occasions will arise in which you may put

your resolve into practice. When you pray, you may consider them at leisure; when you approach the holy table to receive your Lord, prepare yourself by the acts you have already practised, and, by way of thanksgiving, propose to perform others. In the ordinary course of life, let this divine Heart be the lamp that guides your steps. Love whatever It loves; detest what It detests; humble yourself when It is humbled; withdraw when It withdraws; place your affections where His Heart places Its own. Experience will show what interior renovation, what peace, what joy, what light, what fervor, will result from a conformity so holy.



CHAPTER X.

FOURTH FRUIT OF THE DEVOTION — CONFIDENCE
IN JESUS CHRIST.

The Heart of Jesus, the seat of the most tender love, discards the idea of justice and chastisement — The Heart of Jesus superabounds in graces — The Heart of Jesus is pleased to oppose the abyss of His mercy to the abyss of our miseries — Formal promises of Jesus in favor of those who honor His divine Heart.

HE who has a lively and heartfelt confidence in Jesus Christ may congratulate himself on possessing all the treasures of this divine Saviour. For, it is evident from the Holy Scriptures, that graces are proportioned to the degree of our confidence. “If thou canst believe,” says Jesus Christ to the father who asked for the release of his son possessed by the devil, “all things are possible for him who believeth.” (*Mark ix. 22.*) And in another place He says: “Have faith, and truly I say to you, that whoever shall say to this mountain: Be thou removed, and be cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that whatever he saith will be done, it shall be done for him.” (*Mark xi. 23.*) Conformably to this principle,

Jesus tests the faith of His followers, and rewards each one according to the measure of his confidence: "According to your faith, be it done to you." Whoever believed that his cure might be effected by the touch of the divine hands, was cured by this means. If another thought that it was sufficient to touch even the hem of His garment, the touching of that garment cured him. The woman of Canaan did not lose confidence after receiving a rebuff, and notwithstanding this rebuff, she obtained what she prayed for. The centurion believed that a word from Jesus would cure his servant, and Jesus cured that servant by a single word. Jesus required this confidence as a condition on which His favors were granted, and to this He attributed the success of the petitions: so true is the doctrine, taught by theologians, that the fruit of prayer is proportional to confidence. Now, as this is an incontestable truth, have not the lovers of the Sacred Heart every reason to congratulate themselves, as one of the sweetest fruits of their devotion will be confidence? And this is the key of all the divine treasures. Is there an object better suited to inspire confidence, to maintain it, to increase it to the highest degree, than the adorable Heart of Jesus?

1. To convince ourselves of this all-important

truth, we have to gaze with the eyes of faith but for one instant upon this divine Heart. Is it not the seat of infinite power, as well as of the most tender love? Have we, perhaps, forgotten that it is the Heart of our God, who can easily give us the victory and put our enemies to flight? Is there any kind of grace that is not contained in this Heart? Did we fear to be rebuffed, when addressing ourselves to the Heart of Jesus? Was our weakness so wretched, our tepidity so great? Ah! when this Heart ceases to be the treasure of all graces, the comfort of the afflicted, the refuge of sinners, the victory over our enemies, our triumph over the world, the paradise of delights, then, and only then, shall we fail to obtain help from this divine Heart. Indeed, the Sacred Heart has the peculiar glory of being the living and inexhaustible source of those salutary waters of grace that irrigate and fertilize the Church; and Jesus calls the water which He will give, "a fountain of water springing up unto everlasting life." (*John* iv. 14.)

We pass over these truths that are so evident. What restrains confidence? Undoubtedly, the enormous sins by which we have offended the Lord; for, "he that turneth away his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomina-

tion." (*Prov.* xxviii. 9.) The person who refuses the just demands of our Saviour, has to fear that our Saviour may in turn not hear his petition. Tepidity in the service of God decreases very notably our confidence in Him. Frequent resistance to grace, contempt of holy inspirations, indifference to the most amorous invitations on the part of God, a multitude of blemishes, the result of venial faults — all are calculated to chill our fervor, and render us timid and fearful in the presence of God. "If our heart reproves us not, we have confidence towards God. And whatever we seek, we shall receive from Him; because we keep His commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in His sight," (1 *John* iii. 21;) but if our heart reproves us for numberless infidelities and negligences, we dare not raise our eyes in His presence. "If thou wilt put away from thee the iniquity that is in thy hand, and let not injustice remain in thy tabernacle, then mayst thou lift up thy face without spot, and thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear." (*Job* xi. 14.) Now, who can say that he has constantly avoided all faults, serious and trivial? On the contrary, how much reason has he not to blush for his many offences? To say that we have not sinned, writes St. John in his first epistle, is to make God a liar, and to show that

His word is not in us. Thus it is that frequently, whilst thinking of our sins, a chill of horror seizes upon us at the thought of the account we must give, the chastisement we have deserved, the judgment at the tribunal of Jesus Christ. The Saints themselves were not always exempt from these terrors. Is there anything more amiable than an Infant-God? And yet St. Augustin asserts that the cries of the divine Infant filled him with awe; St. Jerome was struck with terror on entering the sacred grotto where Jesus was born. Can we find a more moving spectacle than that of a suffering and crucified God? And yet Jesus Himself teaches us that His passion should inspire us with dread; "for, if in the green wood they do such things, what shall be done in the dry?"

Therefore, it is not surprising that His amiability attracts, whilst His justice terrifies, and that at the very moment we throw ourselves into the arms of a Father, we cannot rid ourselves of the fear of finding in Him the avenger of our iniquities. If, however, we are able, by means of a salutary stratagem, to separate justice from mercy, and to trust in the latter without fear of the former, we may say that all our apprehensions are removed. Jesus imparts this secret to us, when He invites us to His Heart. By having recourse to this Heart,

we make no appeal to His other divine perfections, too frequently, alas, outraged by us; but to His goodness and clemency alone. A heart discards every idea of severity, terror, chastisement, no matter how well deserved; it represents benevolence, speaks of pardon only. When a great personage receives an injury from one in an humble station, and the offender acknowledges his fault and appeals to the kindly sentiments that dwell in the heart of the offended, it will be easy for him to obtain forgiveness. Should not this inspire the clients of the Sacred Heart with confidence? If you, though steeped in crime, says the divine Master, cannot refuse a morsel of bread to your child, because you are not so hard-hearted as to be guilty of such an act, what can this sweetness, this kindness, this more than maternal tenderness of the Heart of Jesus deny us?

2. The superabundance of graces contained in this Heart furnishes another motive of confidence. The liberality of a poor man is a marvel; that of a rich man is nearly always a matter of necessity. Rivers scatter their waters, torrents inundate the fields, the sea beats against every coast, — all these do their duty as a matter of course. But is it thus with that ocean of infinite riches, whose fulness inundates the whole universe? Ascend to heaven

and admire the endless joy of the hierarchies of blessed spirits, and see how they are continually inebriated in this Heart replete with new torrents of delights. Descend to the earth and traverse the entire Church, and observe that she possesses no manner of riches that she has not received from this Sacred Heart. The Church is a depository of profound truths and sublime mysteries; but she has received them from this Heart, in which are enclosed all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. The Church is an inexhaustible mine of graces capable of strengthening and sanctifying the faithful forever; but these graces come to her from this Heart, which is full of grace and truth. The Church overthrows error and elicits the admiration of every people; but this is only a ray of the power and beauty of this Heart, which is the admiration and astonishment of the Angels. The Church has her apostles to announce her teaching to all men; but their zeal is as a spark compared with that which burns in the sacred bosom of the Saviour: she has her martyrs, but their strength is from this Heart. Chaste virgins, that adorn the Church with the splendor of your lilies, who revealed to you the beauty of angelic purity, something of which the world is so ignorant? Ah! you learn how meri-

torious it is, when you behold this Heart so taken with its charms.

But why should I enumerate the graces of this divine Heart one by one? Saint Bernard speaks more directly to the point, when he calls this Heart the temple of the Divinity, the ark of the covenant, the sanctuary of graces. St. Peter Damian says that it is the mine and treasury of the most precious gifts. St. Bonaventure assures us that it is the gate of Paradise. The angelic doctor, St. Thomas, finds in it firmness in faith, perseverance in good works, the spiritual life of sinners. St. Thomas of Villanova, the sainted archbishop of Valencia, borrowing the beautiful imagery of the Psalmist, says that the Church has found her rest in the loving Heart of Jesus, and like the plaintive turtledove, she has placed her young ones in it, that they might remain in safety, until the time of their entrance into heaven. St. Gertrude, St. Mechtildis, St. Aloysius, St. Catherine, St. Teresa, and a hundred other great souls bear witness, from their own experience, that all the treasures of God are to be found in this Heart.

What can I add to this array? Jesus Himself showed His Heart to Blessed Margaret, borne down under the weight of the graces which it contained; He told her that He was anxious to

bestow these graces upon men, and that He would refuse them to no one who had recourse to Him, and that He lamented very much the manner in which they were neglected. Now, can there be any one, who, despite the unanimity of this testimony, despite the guarantees of the most assuring character, and the encouraging experience of others, will think that this Heart contains no graces for him? Will the sun refuse to shine upon you? Will the ocean have not a drop of water for you? What brain could have originated such a thought?

3. At all times there are not wanting those distrustful and pusillanimous souls who know not how to approach Jesus, because their infirmities are too serious, their wounds are too deep, their state is henceforth incurable. What shall I say then to give them confidence? Let them recall to mind the fact that we are here speaking not of the goodness of men, nor of confidence in them, but of the infinite goodness of Jesus, and of the confidence we should have in Him. There are two kinds of mercy in this divine Heart; one, common, usual, which is bestowed on all sinners that ask for it, no matter who they are, even though they are those who never had a thought about it; the other, grander, that triumphs over

the greatest obstacles. The latter shines forth magnificently in regard to the most despairing sinners, by drawing them away from the abyss into which they are on the point of falling, by exciting them to penance, purifying, sanctifying, raising them to the sublime heights of heroic holiness. The Prophet prayed for this mercy when he implored the Lord to have mercy on him according to His great mercy: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy." (*Ps.* l.) In this he hoped when he cried out: "Thou wilt pardon my sin, for it is great." (*Ps.* xxiv. 13.) On this earth, even, we sometimes meet with generous souls, who take the greatest pleasure in avenging outrages by means of the greatest favors conferred on the authors of them; but what so rarely and imperfectly happens among us, is of frequent occurrence with the divine Saviour. The abyss of malice elicits the abyss of goodness. The Blessed Margaret Alacoque received great lights concerning the adorable Heart of Jesus; and these she has embodied in her writings, in order that others might profit by them. I hope the reader will pardon me for introducing this edifying page from her writings:

"The Heart of Jesus is an abyss where everything may be found; it is especially an abyss of

love, in which every other love should be swallowed up, above all, self-love with its evil effects, which are human respect and the desire of raising and satisfying ourselves. In burying these inclinations in the abyss of divine love, you will find all the treasures necessary for you, according to your different positions.

“If you are in an abyss of privation and desolation, this divine Heart is an abyss of all consolation, in which we must lose ourselves without desiring to feel its sweetness.

“If you are in an abyss of dryness and weakness, bury yourself in the Heart of Jesus Christ, which is an abyss of power and love, awaiting His good pleasure to taste the sweetness of this love.

“If you are in an abyss of poverty and deprivation of everything, bury yourself in the Heart of Jesus; it is filled with treasures; it will enrich you if you permit it to do so.

“If you are in an abyss of weakness, of failings, and miseries, go also frequently to the Heart of Jesus; it is an abyss of mercy and strength; it will relieve and fortify you.

“If you are conscious that you are filled with pride and a vain esteem of yourself, bury these quickly in the deep humiliations of the Heart of Jesus; that humble Heart is the abyss of humility.

“If you find yourself in an abyss of ignorance and darkness, the Heart of Jesus is an abyss of light and knowledge; learn especially to love Him, and to do only what he desires of you.

“If you are in an abyss of infidelity and inconstancy, the Heart of Jesus is one of constancy and fidelity; bury yourself there, and you will there find a love, constant in loving us and in doing us good.

“If you feel, as it were, buried in death, go to the Heart of Jesus; you will find there an abyss of life, and you will draw thence a new life, a life by which you will regard everything with the eyes of Jesus Christ; you will no longer act but as He prompts you, you will speak but with His tongue, you will love but with His Heart.

“If you are in an abyss of ingratitude, the Heart of Jesus is an abyss of gratitude: draw from it wherewith to offer to God for all the benefits you have received from Him, and beg of Jesus to supply for you from His abundance.

“If you find yourself overcome with agitation, impatience, or anger, go to the Heart of Jesus, which is an abyss of sweetness.

“If you are in an abyss of dissipation and distraction, you will find in the Sacred Heart of Jesus an abyss of recollection and fervor, which will

supply everything, which will fire your heart and imagination by uniting them to Him.

“If you find yourself plunged in an abyss of sadness, bury the sadness itself in the Heart of Jesus, which is an abyss of heavenly joy, and the treasury of all the delights of the Saints and Angels.

“If you are in trouble and uneasiness, the divine Heart is an abyss of peace, and that peace will be communicated to you.

“If you are in an abyss of bitterness and suffering, unite them to the abyss of the infinite sufferings of the Heart of Jesus, and you will learn to suffer with Him, and to be contented to suffer.

“When you are in an abyss of fear, the Heart of Jesus is an abyss of confidence and love; abandon yourself to it; you will there learn that fear should yield to love.

“Finally, everywhere and in everything bury yourself in this ocean of love and charity, and, if possible, never depart from it, that you may be penetrated with the fire by which this Heart is inflamed for God and man, as the iron in the furnace, or as a sponge cast into the sea, and filled with its waters.”

4. Lastly, Jesus has promised to grant every grace to those who have recourse to the Sacred

Heart. Though He had made no formal promise, His love alone would have authorized us to expect everything from this source; but should not our confidence be increased, now that we have His word for our guarantee? We know that wherever He wished to propagate a new devotion, He made it acceptable by a multitude of heavenly favors. The number of graces which our Lord showered upon men at the time of the institution of the Rosary by the zeal of Saint Dominic, of the devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus by Saint Bernardin, the Scapular by the Blessed Simon Stock, surpasses all belief: the first alone would fill several volumes. What will He not do now, when He wishes to propagate the devotion to the divine Heart? Will He not, according to His promise, open the treasures of His infinite mercy in favor of him who honors this Heart as He wishes it to be honored?

But let us consider these formal promises as they have been recorded by the Blessed Margaret. Whilst we are upon our pilgrimage here below, nothing can give us more consolation than some heaven-sent ray, that illumines our path and conducts us to the celestial country. Nothing has greater influence with souls truly wise. Jesus Christ tells us that "His Heart desires to manifest

itself to men, in order that they may be enriched with its treasures of graces necessary for salvation, that they may not fall into the abyss of perdition.”* And what are these treasures? Our Saviour tells us on another occasion that “He opened to them all the treasures of love, grace, mercy, sanctification, and salvation that this Heart contains, that all those who would wish to render to Him and procure for Him all the love and honor in their power, might be enriched with the profusion of treasures, of which this divine Heart is the fruitful and inexhaustible source.”

Are you a priest of God, engaged in working out your own salvation and that of your neighbor? “My divine Saviour,” says Blessed Margaret, “gave me to understand that those who labor for the salvation of souls, will move the hearts of the most hardened sinners, and be remarkably successful in every undertaking, if they have a tender devotion to the divine Heart.”

Are you upon the stormy sea of the world? “Secular persons,” Jesus says, “will have, by means of this amiable devotion, all the succors necessary for their state, that is, peace in their families, solace in toil, a blessing from heaven on all their undertakings.”

* Writings of Blessed Margaret.

He does not promise less to persons who live in religion. "Religious persons will derive such advantages from this devotion, that its institution in a community will suffice to bring back regularity, restore primitive fervor, and raise its inmates to the height of perfection."

Those who are not contented with practising the devotion, but strive to propagate it, receive a special reward from the Sacred Heart. "Our Saviour," writes the Blessed Margaret, "discovered to me treasures of grace and love for those who will consecrate themselves to His adorable Heart, who will render it and procure for it all the honor, love and glory in their power, and these treasures are so immense that words cannot give an adequate idea of them."

In fine, this divine Heart, after having shown a special predilection for these devoted souls during life, will comfort them at the hour of death: it is according to our Saviour's promise, that these clients should have a place of refuge in life, and especially at the hour of death, in His Heart. Ah! how sweet it is to die after having had a constant devotion to the Sacred Heart of Him who will be our Judge.

These are some of the special promises that Jesus has made. Can we imagine that He will

not make His promises good, or that He is unable to do so? But as we cannot be so unjust to our Saviour as to doubt His word, have we not reason to congratulate ourselves on finding this delicious source of all graces? May Jesus, in His infinite mercy, deign to teach us how to enrich ourselves from this mine, to quench our thirst at this fountain, to inflame our hearts by the ardent rays of this furnace, and then never more to experience a distaste for heavenly things.



CHAPTER XI.

FIFTH FRUIT OF THE DEVOTION — UNION WITH
JESUS CHRIST.

The Devotion promotes this union — Removes the obstacles
— Renders it easy — The union is consummated and perfected by means of the Devotion.

THE union which Christians ought to have with Jesus Christ is not a transcendental practice of piety. Christ has told us that, unless we abide in Him and He in us, we shall never bear fruit of eternal life. Thus, to a certain extent, this union is indispensable to all the faithful. But Jesus may be united with us in many ways. He is united with us when we possess the treasure of sanctifying grace, “because,” as he says, “if any man love Me, We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him;” and with Jesus we have the Father and the Holy Ghost, who cannot be absent when He is present. Jesus unites Himself to souls with more or less abundant bestowal of His gifts, with the communication of His Spirit and His virtues, and the sweetness of His interior presence. The second manner of union has very many degrees

and distinctions, because it depends on the efforts which souls make to acquire it, on the fidelity with which they coöperate with divine grace, and above all, on the measure of the gifts that divine wisdom wishes to bestow. This union is most important in every respect: it is an effect of sanctity and a most efficacious means of acquiring it: it is a means of finding Jesus, and the joy of the soul on having found Him: it is the most earnest desire of the just here on earth, and the beginning of what they hope for in the joys of heaven. Now, this union with Jesus Christ is one of the most precious fruits of the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

1. If it be true, as we have shown in the preceding articles, that devotion to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus imparts the knowledge of Jesus Christ, gives us confidence in Him and love for Him, we can easily see how it must promote union with Him. For, knowledge is its foundation, love is eager to obtain it, and confidence does not allow the object confided in to depart, but enjoys its presence. Apart, however, from these general considerations, others deserve the attention of the pious reader. What are the principles that engender union with Jesus Christ? We say nothing of sanctifying grace, which is the indispensable foundation on which so valuable a gift must rest. The

immediate causes of such a union are two: on the part of man, actual love of Jesus; on the part of Jesus, a more special mercy to man. Love on the part of man cannot intimately unite to Jesus persons who, instead of loving Him, love the world and its dissipations, cherish irregular affections, are fondly attached to display and pleasures, rejoice in pomp and vanities, seek nothing but their own aggrandizement. It is the wish of Jesus Christ that those who desire to be united with Him, should strive, by the help of divine grace, to rid themselves of those base affections that hinder such a union. And this is but just, because the human heart being only a human heart, so miserable, so little, so contracted, the withholding of any part of it would be a great irregularity. The second cause of union with Christ is an additional mercy in our favor. Though an ineffable Providence grants to all the graces necessary for salvation, yet graces of a more special character are not bestowed but through a special mercy. We are expected to ask for them fervently, to coöperate faithfully, and guard them carefully. Even the wise princes of this world, if they care for justice at all, bestow their best favors on those only that serve them more faithfully. A copious source of confidence is here offered to the clients of the Sacred Heart

of obtaining the desired union with Jesus, since they are the special servants of Jesus, who console Him in His most ardent desires. The reader, who is aware of the promise Jesus makes to refuse no favor, when asked for the love of His Heart, must be deeply convinced of it, and, therefore, he may, and ought to trust that this grace of being intimately united with Christ, will be also imparted to him. And this trust should be the firmer inasmuch as the other disposition cannot be wanting in him, who professes devotion to the Sacred Heart. I know well that not all who approach Jesus are pure and free from every earthly affection; nay, many go to Him to obtain the desired purity, and it is one of the brightest glories of the Sacred Heart to dispose souls that approach Jesus to love Him; but I know also that the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, bearing gradually its proper fruits, enlightens the mind by showing the nothingness of all earthly things, and causes it to desire only what is really good, great, sweet, and worthy of love. The devotion, in a word, augments our love of God, which is, as we have said, the immediate cause of union with Jesus Christ.

2. But this devotion procures this good for us more directly, since it removes effectually the obstacles which prevent this union. Moreover,

the union is rendered easier in practice by the same means. For, after all, what is this union with Christ? No one should think that it is something so mystical and sublime as to be procurable only by the greatest Saints. For, though there are high degrees of union with Jesus Christ, proper only to Saints, we do not speak here of them, as extraordinary gifts are independent of common rules.

The union of which we speak is that which takes place in us through sanctifying grace, and its essence consists in the practice of the virtues, especially of faith, hope and charity. It is that union which is obtained by the participation of the most holy Sacrament with due dispositions, and which is therefore called Communion. It is the union which is obtained through holy desires, colloquies, prayers, and above all, through the imitation of Him who imprints on us His divine features. This union is proper to all Christians who, as the Apostle says, are signed with the seal of Jesus Christ. So far from being a transcendental and supererogatory thing, it is nothing else but an engrafting on the tree of life, which is Jesus Christ, and which must be carried into effect to become fruitful branches in the house of God, and not be cut off as useless shoots, and thrown into eternal fire. Now, what

are the greatest obstacles to this indispensable union? Let us set aside mortal sin, which is not only an obstacle, but the total destruction of the union with Christ. The most common obstacles are two: curiosity of the mind, and the ill-regulated affections of the heart. Curiosity prompts us to take hold of innumerable objects; we must see everything, know everything, even such as do not concern us or are prejudicial to us. Hence the imagination becomes filled with fantastic ideas, the senses are disquieted, the thoughts become distressed, and the mind, more occupied than it ought to be, finds neither place nor time to think seriously about what is truly necessary. Ill-regulated affections take possession of our heart, and consequently take it away from God; they keep it immersed, now in the disordered affection of earthly goods, now in the attachment to creatures, now in a vain self-complacency and in the enjoyment of worldly honors. Being so bound and captivated, one cannot raise himself to God, and knows not how to break his fetters and free himself from servitude. Would to God we had not so much experience of it as our frailty and misery cause us to have! Thus we could not but feel greatly obliged to him who would pacify our mind and efficaciously bind our will to what is good, and detach and free it

from all bondage. Here is precisely, my reader, the advantage you may draw from the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Give your mind to the secret contemplation of the divine Heart and let it see the heavenly beauties that are in it; let it comprehend in a measure the great treasures that are in it, and you shall see whether it will go so foolishly in search of other objects which uselessly distract it. Nourish your heart with the food of these divine affections, and you shall see if it will any longer find sweetness in the affections of this earth. "Alas!" exclaimed St. Augustine, "I was looking for Thee, my God, out of myself, and asked all creatures about Thee, and they told me something of Thee; but I should have looked for Thee in myself, to find Thee sooner and better." Why shall we not say the same of the most dear Heart of Jesus? Alas! with my foolish thoughts, with my curiosity, I go in search of some little knowledge in the study of nature, or of arts, or of sciences, and sometimes I distract myself also in the search of Thee in various ways; but would I not find everything at once in Thy Sacred Heart? Are there not here united all the greatness of the divinity, all the treasures of the wisdom and science, of the goodness and mercy, of the holiness and justice, of the omnipotence and immensity of God?

Are there not gathered here the humiliations of the Sacred Humanity, the concealment and annihilation of a God? Are there not here the treasures of the divine virtues which I ought to know and admire, and endeavor to copy in myself? Is it not here that we find the fulness of worship, the adoration, the sacrifice, the intimate union with Him? Is there not here that which can fully satisfy the mind and the heart, so that I need look for nothing more out of Him? Among all the most enticing beauties, none certainly has such powerful attractions as the heart. Beauty charms the eyes, riches gratify the appetites, music and perfumes captivate the senses, magnificence exacts admiration, happiness is envied; but nothing except a heart can enchain a heart. Imagine that you certainly know that a person is thinking of you, busies himself about you, sincerely loves you, and you cannot but feel moved by it. Why? Because we cannot divest ourselves of our nature. But if such is the case with hearts of so little value as ours — light, inconstant, and let us say also, unclean and defiled — what shall we say of the Heart of Jesus? Yet if we approach the divine Heart, we cannot help feeling that it loves us, and loves us with condescension, with tenderness, with constancy, and bestows upon us the most valuable and un-

heard of benefits. How can we resist? How can we feel after this any attachment to created things? How can we help feeling the most irresistible tendency towards it? This is the disposition which leads souls directly to a union with Jesus Christ.

3. Besides, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus facilitates our union with Jesus Christ in many ways. It has been hitherto suggested how this union may be effected; we will presently show with what ease it may be accomplished. The most substantial union and the foundation of all others is, unquestionably, that which is bestowed by sanctifying grace. This it is which incorporates us with Jesus Christ, which renders us the adopted children of God, makes us participants of the divine influence of our Head, and gives us the right to glory. Now this union is first obtained by baptism, and afterwards, to those who have had the great misfortune of losing it, restored in the Sacrament of Penance. However, as divine grace is capable of being indefinitely increased, this Heart very opportunely opens the unsealed fountains of its goodness to the longing soul. And indeed, where else shall we look for the well-spring of living water, gushing forth into streams, life-giving and constant? During His mortal life, the Blessed Redeemer conferred no more precious or consoling

gift, than when, to the kneeling and repentant sinner, the sweet words, "thy sins are forgiven," fell from His lips.

The acts of Faith, Hope and Charity concur also to the strengthening of our union with Christ. Faith is the foundation of all the acts of piety and religion which we perform; Hope inspires a confidence that our little offerings will be accepted, and spurs us on to wrestle manfully with the repugnances of nature; Charity, in fine, is the bond which unites us to Jesus and consummates our perfection. The other virtues either dispose us to this happy union or are an effect of it, and all these, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, have their motives, their form, and their model in the Sacred Heart. We have had occasion to remark before, that it is especially in the Sacrament of the Eucharist that the soul experiences this loving intercourse, and finds its most perfect union with Christ. And it is for this very reason that it receives the name of Communion. Yet how much more close and endearing will be our union in this mystery of love, if we shall have recourse to the most Sacred Heart? He who visits this loving Heart, after profoundly adoring, will be lifted up in confidence to the bosom of his God, and, from its unfathomable depths of love, taste all the

sweetness of Jesus, his Saviour, his Redeemer, his Father, his Brother, his Friend, his Pastor, his Spouse, his every good. He who penetrates into the depths of its tenderness, must be inspired with the amiableness, touched by the gracious invitation to the heavily-laden heart, and, raised and comforted by the assurance of so much love, he will pour forth his whole soul in acts which have a special fervor and value. He who assists at holy Mass will gather an especial fruit of devotion, if, while the great Victim is offered, concentrating his affections in the divine Heart and uniting his own heart to that of Jesus, he will present it to the Father. For then he offers to the divine Majesty a holocaust of sweetness with the purest acts of reverence that the blessed Trinity can ever receive. Finally, if it is true, as we shall presently see, that the closest ties of union are those which bind heart to heart, he who, partaking of this bread of angels, shall turn his affections towards this Sacred Heart, will attain a most perfect union.

Prayer, aspirations, holy desires, are also great helps to our union with Jesus. These keep us continually present to Him and Him to us, but I hesitate not to affirm that this intercourse will be far sweeter, if we address ourselves to His divine

Heart ; because, in this special object, the spirit will be less distracted, in this sweetness the affection will be more full ; and these appeals will be attended by more abundant graces, since Jesus wishes to be more particularly honored in His Heart.

Lastly, the imitation of Jesus completes the union with Him, for it constitutes between Jesus and the Christian a true resemblance instead of a union of desire. The faithful imitators of Jesus Christ cherish His thoughts and maxims, embrace His ignominies, His poverty, His cross ; hence that most precious union peculiar to those who have the same thoughts, the same feelings, and the same kind of life and labor. But we have already shown that the imitation of Christ is a special fruit of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. We see, then, what grounds we have to hope for union with Him.

4. I must say more. In the sincere devotion to the Heart of Jesus we find the consummation and perfection of the union with Christ ; because, as you know, pious reader, a person may, in many ways, be united with another. There is a merely material union that exists between objects near each other, and this is so insignificant that it may take place even between beings which do not

naturally agree. Between rational beings, there may be a conformity of sentiments, and the same mode of thinking, and this is unquestionably something more than the preceding, since it is the beginning of concord, yet it does not necessarily produce it. On account of interested motives, conformity of thoughts may be attended by difference of wills. The most intimate union is that of hearts; because in this the affections and the wills are the same; the will of one is, in a manner, transposed into that of the other. This union is most tranquil, for, between rational beings, discord has its origin only in a difference of wills; it is the only union of the affections, because it is accomplished in the centre of the affections; it elevates or depresses man; for, man is what his love is.

If this takes place in every earthly union, shall it not, with greater reason, have sway in the union with that object so sovereignly amiable — the Divine Heart? When the soul is united with the Heart of Jesus, it has true peace, true joy, true rest, and what is more, true sanctity and consummate perfection. For in this heavenly union, Jesus Christ rules, and man partakes of the qualities of the object with which he is united. Humility, patience, meekness, zeal, charity, all the virtues of

Jesus Christ will become the virtues of the one who is united with Him. Above all, conformity to the will of God will be prominent, for man will be able to say, "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me;" I live in that Heart and through that Heart, hence I desire nothing but what that Heart desires. What are our hopes for eternity? To be united with Jesus. Let then "Thy kingdom come," whilst we begin here on earth, through the devotion to Thy Sacred Heart, what we hope to do throughout eternity.



CHAPTER XII.

SIXTH FRUIT OF THE DEVOTION—SECURITY FROM
THE EVILS OF THE TIMES.

The besetting sin of our times is sensuality — The Sacred Heart is our security from it — Irreligion is another evil — The devotion to the Sacred Heart is the preventive — God makes use of means apparently the most feeble, in order to effect the greatest results.

WHEN Jesus offered His Heart to the world as a precious gift, and made it the object of a peculiar devotion, He signified that this Heart was a means by which languor would depart from the hearts of the tepid, and security be given to souls in danger of being led astray by the seductions of the world into the abyss of perdition. This fact is so consoling, so rich in graces, and of such importance to us, that we must not pass it over in silence. And is it not of paramount importance for the Christian to aspire to the happiness of being proof against the seductions of the world, to which we are exposed in these latter days? That person knows very little about the joys of the heavenly Jerusalem, who does not rejoice at the thought of being able to make himself more

sure of possessing them ; and he must have a very incorrect idea of eternal despair, who gives no thought to the manner of avoiding it. Let us reflect for a moment on this subject, in order that we may rightly estimate its value and enjoy more largely its benefits.

1. The evils that press heavily on mankind now-a-days are serious and complicated. No one can doubt this fact. There is one evil that extends to all ages and conditions. This evil is preëminently dangerous : it is the thirst for sensual pleasures, avidity for earthly enjoyments, unbridled sensuality. In society, no effort is made to hide it ; sensuality is the subject of every conversation, the sigh of every heart. For this purpose are multiplied those temples where burns continually the incense of this unclean idol. Domestic diversions, enlivened by all imaginable excitements, are of daily occurrence. The theatres are crowded not only at the midnight hour, but even till the dawn of day ; and these representations are now procurable at so cheap a rate, that the masses and even the poor may be present at them. Balls are no longer the boon of the rich : the lowest classes have them. Places of public resort are not only frequented on festive occasions ; they have become for the artisan a kind of necessity, even during the week. Gam-

bling-houses, taverns, libraries filled with immoral books—all these developments of modern civilization, are the blessings by which our cities and towns are to be raised up to the skies. This mania for pleasure upsets all the systems which a perverse philosophy has invented and still continues to invent; for, notwithstanding the efforts made by the zealots of modern civilization to hide its corruption, they will never succeed in their undertaking. Why have we so many new inventions, if not, in many cases, to increase the sum of human enjoyments? Why are theatres so well supported, if not because they contribute to pleasure? Why is there no one to attack the indecency of these spectacles? People wish to enjoy these things shamelessly and without reproof. Why is it that the poor must be huddled together, no matter where, provided they are removed from view? Their presence would cast a gloom over the scene and rebuke the world in its pleasures. Why are the sensual and the material so highly appreciated? Because every one beholds in them an inexhaustible source of enjoyment. Pleasure—this is the centre of all the intrigues, cabals, projects and crimes against public authority. The world has only one thought, to find a means of removing all restraint on the part of the law, and of giving full scope to

its desires. Hatred of religion comes from no other source, for religion ordains detachment from worldly things, condemns wickedness, and threatens with the most terrible chastisements those who do evil. This arouses the evil-doers, and hence their efforts to overturn and destroy religion, in order to shake off this annoying yoke and this cause of remorse. But religion does not forbid us all kinds of pleasure, but only such as are sensual, carnal and brutal. One acquainted with the impious tendencies of the age, its theories, shameful doctrines, and destructive devices, cannot deny that sensuality is the great evil of our times, the gulf in which is lost a multitude of souls.

What is worse, not only men openly corrupt, who wallow in the slough of iniquity, but even those who have not given up all hope of their salvation, and who make profession of Christianity, are more than half infected with the same leprosy. It is true that these men do not accept, in all their crudity, the detestable principles sown broadcast over the world in our days by the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists, concerning the *rehabilitation* of the flesh, the necessity of pleasures, the right to all kinds of enjoyment, and other infamous things of this nature. And yet these principles, clothed in a modern dress and echoed a thousand times by

a servile press, have become a power capable of dazzling very many souls and of defiling the hearts of numberless persons. It is true that they do not seek for pleasure in the haunts of vice, but still they are addicted to enjoyments not so seriously condemned, and whilst refraining from giving up their whole life to them, they give at least the greater part of it. Thus seduced by this worldly spirit, they have no other thought but of routs, balls, theatres, concerts and soirees, having no regard at the same time for common decency. They take it ill, if others speak against these pleasures; they make no apology for them, but even introduce them into their families, not knowing, nor caring to know, the dangers connected with them. So much are they carried away by these dangerous pleasures, that no other thing can gain their love. Now, what is all this but to love and adore the idol of pleasure so much denounced by the Gospel? What is all this but to open the flood-gates of iniquity? This irregular love of the flesh and of pleasures, is the inspiration of the love of this world, against which the Apostle St. John warns us, under pain of being deprived of the love of the Father: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him."

(1 *John* i. 15.) It proceeds from the spirit of this world, with which we should have no conformity, according to the saying of St. Paul: "Be not conformed to the world," (*Rom.* xii. 2;) of this world whose friendship, says St. James, is the enmity of God; of this world which the Prince of the Apostles exhorts us to avoid carefully: "Flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world," (2 *Peter* i. 4;) of this world against which incarnate Wisdom hurled His invectives, since all His words and actions tend to its condemnation. He excluded it even from His divine prayers: "I pray not for the world." (*John* xvii. 9.) Though one may be but imperfectly acquainted with everything that takes place in the world, he will, at least, observe that the world is ruled more by this base spirit now than at any former epoch. Certainly, the demon, who is called the prince of the world by our divine Master, has had at all times numerous followers; but only in these modern days have there been found men bold enough to advocate the rehabilitation of the flesh, the right to pleasure, the necessity of enabling every one to have improper enjoyments. Who does not see the perils that surround Christians now-a-days, the seductions and snares to which they are exposed? And are not those who naturally incline to these

sordid pleasures, and have little strength to resist the world's caresses, in much greater danger?

Here, then, shines forth the merciful tenderness of our Lord Jesus Christ in our regard. For an evil so deplorable, a disorder so serious, He wishes to give a remedy, but one of a most appropriate nature. The holy Doctor, Saint Bernard, has very pointedly said that men, when aspiring to be as gods, lost the good they had, and precipitated themselves into an abyss of evil. The divine Word is made to use this language by the same Saint: "See how my Father lost His creatures, because they wished to resemble me. I shall reduce myself to such a state, that whosoever looks upon me and desires to be like me, shall not lose his soul, but gain an infinite good." Our Saviour has had recourse to a like and not less loving expedient. The love of sensible things urges us on to the abyss of perdition: a sensible object then shall attract us, and the poison shall be changed into an antidote; life shall come out of death. We stand in need of a sensible life, of an affectionate heart that understands us, that sympathizes with us, that loves us, and into which we may pour out our own hearts: this Heart is offered us by our Saviour, and it is sufficient for all inclinations and for all necessities. Partly

from the effeminacy of our education, partly from a want of energy, and still more from criminal habits, and the tyranny of our passions, we are drawn to what pleases our senses. Our Saviour satisfies us on this point, and He offers us a heart, the love of which will satiate our most ardent desires, and be the term of our affections.

Would that we were able to form some idea of the infinite sweetness of this Heart, of its affability, its kindness, its meekness, its condescension, its transcendent amiability! For then, indeed, instead of prostituting our affections to a thousand unworthy objects, that deprave and defile us, we would consecrate ourselves entirely to it. The meekness of this divine Heart is not an apathy which tolerates what cannot be prevented, but an effect of heavenly patience with our faults. Its affability is not an indulgence awkwardly granted by a superior to an inferior, but a condescension on the part of Him who deigns to abase infinite Majesty to the level of our nothingness. Its sweetness is not an earthly sweetness, but an unspeakable sweetness which rejoices heaven. Its kindness is no ordinary commiseration for the sufferings of others, but a sympathy based on intensest love. Are you in need of a person to sympathize with you in your misfortune? This

Heart will sympathize with you. Do you desire comfort? It is ready to give you all manner of assistance. Would you unbosom yourself? God grant that you make this Heart your confidant. Our Saviour would be infinitely pleased, if you were to make His Heart your refuge, the depository of your chagrin, your lasting abode. Does your heart wish to love and be loved? May the infinite amiability of the Sacred Heart be known by the children of men, and may they refuse to be contented with a drop of water, when the entire ocean is at their disposal! Mankind must not be blinded by rays of light, when they can even enjoy the sun.

As a general thing, the world loves what is upright, or what gives some gratification or advantage. But are not these things found in an eminent degree in the Sacred Heart? If beauty, goodness, grace, affability, ravish your heart, you can find all in this Heart: created and uncreated beauty, finite and infinite goodness, human and divine perfections, fulness of grace and truth. Do possessions, riches and treasures attract you? To whom do all the goods of this world belong if not to this divine Heart, which distributes as it wills? Perhaps those pleasures in which you indulged, in order to gratify your passions, made you still more

the slave of your inferior nature, by reason of the unquenchable desire, increased by the recent concession. Nothing base can ever satiate. Give yourself to this Heart; taste its sweetness, place your heart in this Heart, communicate confidently with it; and rest assured, that after having partaken of unmeasured consolation, you will see how contemptible and vile all created things are. The Saints who found their happiness in this Heart, were of the same material as yourself; they had natural affections that bore them on to evil, hearts prone to sin; nevertheless, aided by divine grace, they were able to know the vileness of passion, and to find repose and honor in the bosom of Christ.

Believe not that the infinite purity of this Heart will neutralize its kindness, nor that its holiness will render it less condescending. Just the opposite takes place. The abundance of its perfections makes it a thousand times more amiable and loving. Besides, in this Heart, amiability, sweetness, condescension, are not passing emotions, subject to any number of vicissitudes, as it happens with us, but are the effects of its divine prerogatives and the choice of our Saviour's perfect will. Whilst, before the coming of Christ, men were bid to repress pride which made them envy the divine

nature, the incarnate Word now says to them : "I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also." (*John* xiii. 15.) Thus conditions have changed ; and if formerly we were forbidden to love material objects, we are now urged to love them, but to love them as they are in the divine Heart.

2. Another most serious evil, irreligion, the product of an unbridled love of pleasure, weighs heavily upon us. As religion is the firmest rampart against the most impetuous fury of the passions, so those men who have determined to gratify their evil inclinations at any price, commence by entertaining an aversion, then a hatred for religion, and end by striving, with all their energies, to banish it from the earth. That the implacable hatred of many for religion is brought about in this way no one can doubt. Our age has not found new arguments against the truth of religion ; and those who are conspicuous workers against it, are not men whose time by day and night is consecrated to the progress of science. These men speak as they do, because they cannot bear that the Christian faith should labor unceasingly to establish the predominance of grace over nature, of reason over the senses, of the spiritual over the animal man. This interference torments them

and renders them furious: this evokes so many blasphemies. As this love of pleasure — small thanks to the writings that inspired it, to the theatres, taverns, clubs, assemblies, amusements which have so multiplied the means of gratifying this inclination, that the poor are no longer excluded — has carried away all states and conditions of life, so irreligion has an echo in the lowest as well as in the highest ranks of society. Whence comes the tendency amongst many toward Protestantism? What end in view have all the admirers and apologists of heresy? Is it to render a purer worship to the Most High? They have no such intention: a single glance at their irregular lives will convince us of this fact. They wish to do away with every restriction on libertinism. They would escape the trouble of hearing mass, of prayer; they want no Lent, no watching, no abstinence, no fasts; they are unwilling to give an account of their wanderings at the sacred tribunal of penance; they would be answerable to no power for their own conduct. And all this we are taught by the history of Luther and by our own observation.

Now, for men of the world, so weak, so irresolute, so ignorant of divine things, so prone of themselves to evil, and so powerfully drawn on by

the example of others, the ills brought about by irreligion are incalculable; by that irreligion which is on so many lips, which is spread abroad by numberless works, proclaimed in many theatres, met with in every walk of life. Who can escape these imminent dangers? Who will keep safe and intact, in the bottom of his heart, that vivifying root, called faith, in which is the germ of eternal salvation? Pious reader, the effect of the devotion which I offer you, is to make you proof against these dangers. And this will happen for many reasons. The love of sensible things, as I have said, is the first source of unbelief. If, then, you extinguish that vast conflagration which destroys so many hearts; if you open an asylum where these hearts may remain in safety, by this alone you will have removed the origin of unbelief. But how restore those hearts to their pristine state? How detach them from the love of created objects? It would be as unchristian, as it is foolish, to believe that it can be done by human reason. There is need of that grace, which St. Augustin calls medicinal, grace which cures our wounds, strengthens our weakness, and promptly arouses our virtue. This is the only remedy of infallible efficacy; and the more this grace abounds, the less will be the danger of prevarication. And has not Jesus

promised this very remedy? Did He not say, on many occasions, that He had in His Heart treasures of grace, sufficient to draw from the ways of perdition the souls who would have recourse to Him and put their trust in Him. Many, perhaps, may not see how this can be done; but though this be so, the fact is incontrovertible. Moreover, it is not so difficult a thing to conceive some of the thousand ways in which He may be our bulwark amid the temptations against faith. Irreligion is a darkness of the soul, that takes away the just idea of the divine mysteries of revelation; from the Heart of Jesus there shines forth a pleasing light, which, shed on the truths of our faith, illumines and exalts them. Irreligion is the perfidious and obstinate treason of a Heart that revolts against the sovereign authority of God; from the Sacred Heart there flows an humble submission which causes us to yield not only to the authority of God, but even to that of men, when within the bounds of duty. Irreligion is the poisonous fruit of a noxious plant, or rather of a heart corrupted by brutal passions; the Sacred Heart is a balm that cures the most virulent and infectious wounds, provided it be properly administered. Irreligion tends to luxury, is given to pride, is consummated in apostasy; the Sacred Heart wards off this unhappy end by in-

spiring purity; it promotes holy humility; it attracts and attaches to itself continually those hearts that confide in it. Irreligion recoils from and despises exterior practices and the simple exercises of piety, because, far from tasting the sweetness of this delicious manna, which pertains to divine things, it finds in them only weariness and insurmountable disgust: the Heart of Jesus, on the contrary, renders heavenly things supremely delightful by the sweet unction of fervor which they excite. All these graces, together with numberless others that flow from the Sacred Heart, are an impenetrable buckler against the poisoned arrows of incredulity; by these graces those destructive weapons are blunted, and we are rendered invincible. In a word, the devotion to the Sacred Heart produces the most marvellous fruits; since it wards off all the assaults to which we are exposed, and arms us completely against our enemies. Finally, is this not the Heart of Him who is the author and finisher of our faith? Why then shall it not be our sweet refuge from the enemies of our faith? Is it not the living fountain of all graces? Will it not produce the grace, which is the principle and foundation of all others?

3. Some may say that whilst enumerating the marvellous fruits that we place in the devotion to

the Sacred Heart, we have yielded to exaggeration, and that in a work praiseworthy, if you choose, we have attributed to this devotion effects depending on other causes, or that we have in our admiration gone beyond the possible. If there is any one tempted to form such a judgment, I ask him most earnestly, in the first place, to consider attentively what is this Heart, to which we attribute so many prodigies. Would you fear for a moment that I could exaggerate the virtue and efficacy of a Heart infinite in perfections, of a Heart which is the love of the Angels, the delight of the adorable Trinity? Is it not rather the source of all the succors which have sustained the Church in the past, and of all that she hopes for in the future? That notion of the Sacred Heart were very unworthy, which would lose confidence in the excellence and multitude of graces attributed to it. None but such as have had only the merest insight into the hidden virtue of our divine mysteries, could yield to such distrust. Let us see, then, how different the ways of God are from ours.

We think that great things cannot be done but by means striking in appearance. God, however, accomplishes His designs by means that do not appear great exteriorly, but which have instead a hidden virtue. When the Albigenses swept over

France, ravaging with fire and sword the rich provinces of Toulouse and Montpellier, what means would human prudence have suggested, in order to subdue the fury of these monsters, and wrest the arms from their hands? Men would have met men with force; but God put in the hands of one of His servants the Rosary, and St. Dominic, by preaching upon this pious practice and by inculcating it everywhere, disarmed those unfortunate men, appeased, calmed, and led them to the fold of Christ, which they had abandoned. In the thirteenth century, when the civil wars, factions, hostilities, and revenge, with their attendant disorders, were at their height in Italy, what remedy would have been imagined by human wisdom? Perhaps, a severer police in those provinces, a wiser administration of public affairs, a better legislation. God, in place of all this, sent St. Bernardin, armed with the Name of Jesus, and this holy man, causing this Name to be engraven on every house, calmed dissensions, rooted out vices, and restored to virtue, long exiled, its ancient honor. And in our own times, what does our Saviour do to raise innumerable sinners from death to life? He makes use of the hidden charms of the sweet and immaculate Heart of His most holy Mother.

In the divine economy of our faith, the means that God employs for the most sublime works, are apparently not only simple, but even contemptible. He changes the heart not unfrequently by an unpolished sermon; with the waters of baptism, He cleanses the soul from the stain of original sin; with chrism, He sanctifies it in confirmation; in the sacrament of penance, by means of the absolution given by man, perhaps by a sinner, He restores it to life; lastly, in the sacrament of extreme unction, He strengthens it for the voyage of eternity. What proportion would these means have with the end in view, if a hidden virtue had not been imparted to them by the Almighty?

But something still more striking remains to be said: what was the great work of Christ upon earth? To shackle the powers of hell, to wrest from their mighty grasp every captive, to give satisfaction to God proportioned to the outrage inflicted, to render Him perfect glory, and homage worthy of Him. What did He do to accomplish all this? St. Augustin, in the "City of God," tells us at considerable length. By the apparent weakness of His humanity, He triumphed over the arrogance and tyranny of His enemies; by means of His humility, He broke down their pride. The Cross, which was a folly to the Gentiles and a

stumbling-block to the Jews, reconciled heaven with the world, justice with mercy; it repaired the ruins made by sin, opened up for man innumerable ways of salvation, and glorified perfectly the divine Majesty.

It is not wonderful, therefore, that Jesus Christ promises to enkindle in the hearts of the faithful the fire of charity now grown cold, to preserve them from the dangers of the times, to bestow on them all kinds of graces by means of His divine Heart. We should have a very poor idea of the ways of God — it cannot be repeated too often — if we doubted of the efficacy of those succors He offers in this touching devotion. The sentiment, by which we should be most moved in this connection, is one of lively gratitude in return for a gift so precious in itself, so acceptable on account of our necessities. Indeed, who is not struck by the great number of those souls, of whom we may say with the Apostle, that “putting away a good conscience they have made shipwreck concerning the faith?” (1 *Tim.* i. 19.) Youth scarcely attains the age of passion before it is entirely abandoned to all kinds of irregularities, to which it is incited by that material civilization that meets it on the threshold of society; and for this reason, there is no longer any thought of the soul, of para-

dise, of eternity. Irreligion, the fruit of license, raises its haughty front even among persons of that sex which formerly had the enviable glory of maintaining and preserving godliness, which, St. Paul says, is profitable for all things. Some of this sex seem to glory in their shamelessness; they boast of being indevout; they outrage God Himself. There was a time when in the rural districts simple faith reigned by reason of the simplicity of manners; but soon faith will be exiled from this last stronghold on account of the inundation of immorality and perverse maxims, which will spread rapidly from the cities to the humblest hamlet. Scarcely a family has not to lament with bitter tears the loss of a son or a daughter, of a husband or a wife; we do not speak of those depraved families, in which irreligion has become the normal state; there we see no sorrow for excess, since it is no longer regarded as an evil.

As this is the case, which no one can deny, who will be able to appreciate properly the favor bestowed on us by the Lord, who has opened for us His adorable Heart as our refuge amid dangers, as our security from the snares set for our innocence, as our preservation from so many evils? Let each one have recourse to it with sentiments of gratitude. Christian parents, you who tremble

for the lot of your children, and consider their future sometimes with tears in your eyes, consecrate your loved ones in their tender years to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and it will preserve them in the midst of perils. Young people, launched on a sea beset with rocks innumerable, are you desirous of escaping shipwreck? Save yourselves in this haven, where the winds and storms are harmless. Chaste doves, that fear the talons of the hawk, behold your place of safety. Priests of the Lord, place your flock in the Heart of Jesus, if you wish to keep it untarnished by the corruption and infidelity of the world. Let all have recourse to this Heart, and all will experience that our Lord, though allowing us to contend continually, in order to show the constancy of our love, will not cease to assist us in our necessities by means of new and potent succors.



CHAPTER XIII.

SEVENTH FRUIT OF THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED
HEART OF JESUS — OUR SOLACE IN ALL TRIBULA-
TIONS.

Jesus is all compassion — First proof: His eagerness to comfort the suffering — Second proof: Jesus has experienced all our miseries — The consolations we find in the Sacred Heart are the only solid and salutary ones — These consolations solace the heart — The Sacred Heart is the refuge of all the miserable, particularly of sinners — The Sacred Heart is the especial consolation of souls wearied by interior struggles — The Sacred Heart remains with us to be our consoler.

SPIRITUAL infirmities that have, as we said in the preceding chapter, so efficacious a remedy in the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, are, in very truth, the most grievous maladies to which man is subject, though they are not the only ones, nor ordinarily the most sensibly felt. There are others, less dangerous, indeed, but extremely poignant; I mean anguish, tribulations, poverty, diseases of the body, affliction of spirit — all so frequent on the journey of life, that they seem to spring up under our feet. Now, the Sacred Heart of Jesus offers also an admirable solace in all

such misfortunes. Bear in mind this truth, that tribulation is the lot of every man, and that the solace which the Sacred Heart offers is beyond comparison. What we seek for elsewhere is uncertain; this Heart is infallible. What we beg from creatures is vain, degrading, or even criminal; this Heart is sovereignly pure and holy. Others promise to give a peace which they cannot give; this Heart has a wonderful and efficacious peace. In a word, whilst created things may comfort us in some one misfortune, this Heart is the balm that soothes in every tribulation of the soul, every malady of the body. All these precious advantages should inspire us with the highest esteem of this devotion, and cause us to embrace it ardently for our own good, if not for some higher motive.

1. That the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the most salutary consolation of the afflicted, is easily understood. Indeed, if the hearts of the Saints upon earth were the sure refuge of the miserable; if a heart kindly disposed cannot refuse consolation to an afflicted soul; if human hearts, in a word, are endowed with a tender sensibility; if they, so wretched, so limited, are capable of such emotions, what should we not expect from the great, compassionate, and generous Heart of

Jesus? To doubt of this would be folly; and say what you please, we cannot stifle the sweet sentiment of confidence which the simple thought of the Sacred Heart excites in our hearts. And this sentiment is not a blind impulse; for, after all, what is Jesús? There is in His Name, in His Being, in His works, in His merits, in His life, in His death, in whatever recalls Him to our minds, the idea of Saviour of the human race, of repairer of disorders, of light in darkness, of teacher and guide of our footsteps, the source of our beatitude—in fine, our universal restorer in all disasters. As it is the lot of the seaman to be tossed on the waves and to breast the storms, of the farmer to cultivate the fields, of the physician to cure the body; so, to be Jesus, is to be the comfort, the physician, the consolation, the safety, the remedy for every evil. But if Jesus means all this, what will not His adorable Heart signify to any one who knows how to comprehend it? Will not the pious soul have immediately a vivid representation of that infinite compassion which Jesus has in our regard, of the excess of goodness, clemency, mercy, kindness, patience, longanimity, which are peculiar to the Word made flesh? And why should not an object so worthy be a wonderful source of consolation? Why should not a soul find here every-

thing to make it feel secure and strong in affliction? Again, Jesus assumed this Heart expressly to sympathize with us in our miseries, according to the thought of the Apostle: "We have not a High Priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities." (*Heb. iv. 15.*)

God, in His divine nature, could have easily heard our prayers, pardoned our faults, heaped all manner of blessings on us; but as long as He had not a heart like ours, He was incapable of experiencing in Himself our emotions, of being moved to tears on account of our miseries. He can now do this, because He has a human heart; and He can do more, inasmuch as this Heart is perfect. Hence His immense compassion for us; and from this compassion flows the exquisite balm that heals our wounds. For him who meditates on the Gospels nothing is more striking than this affection of the Heart of Jesus. We have no tribulation that He has not experienced; no misfortune for which He has not shed tears; no infirmity that has not found a speedy cure at His hands. Jesus meets the poor widow of Naim, who weeps over the corpse of her only son. He is moved to tears; stops the funeral cortege; recalls the dead to life; and not content with this miracle, He takes the young man by the hand and gives him to his mother, as if

unsatisfied until He sees the tears of the mother give place to joy: "Being moved with pity toward her, He said to her: Weep not. And *He* gave him to his mother." (*Luke* vii. 13.) *Jesus* comes to the house of Magdalene, and hears that Lazarus is dead; at the sight of the affliction of the sister, and moved by the presence of the corpse, "He groans in the spirit, and troubles Himself," to the great wonder of the bystanders. He gives Himself no repose until He has called the dead brother to life, and given peace of mind to Mary, his sister: "Jesus, when He saw her weeping, and the Jews weeping who had come with her weeping, groaned in the spirit and troubled Himself." On other occasions, "Jesus goes about all the cities and towns, and seeing the multitudes, he has compassion on them, because they were harassed, and lying about as sheep having no shepherd." (*Matt.* ix. 36.) Jesus draws near to the city of Jerusalem, and foreseeing the chastisements in store for it on account of its obstinacy and perfidy to its Saviour, He weeps over it: "Seeing the city, He wept over it." (*Luke* xix. 41.) As He passes from city to city, from town to town, all kinds of sick persons are brought to Him, in order to be cured; He pities them, cures them, consoles them. Mothers ask Him to bless their little children; these

gather around Him and press on Him. The Apostles, yielding to their respect for Jesus, would drive them away; but He, far from being pleased with their interference, rebukes them; He orders them to allow the children to approach Him, "and He took them in His arms and put His hands on them, and blessed them." (*Mark* x. 16.) But once did this great Heart attempt to show itself insensible to the sufferings of another, and that was with the woman of Canaan, who was given to understand that Jesus would not in any way free her daughter, possessed by the devil; but the poor mother humbly persevered in prayer, and Jesus could not withhold the boon any longer, and, having passed a high encomium on her faith, He granted what she asked for: "O woman, great is thy faith." Jesus is in the middle of a desert; a numerous crowd of eager listeners surrounds Him; the Apostles wish to dismiss and send each one to his home; but He has not the heart to act in this manner, when He considers that the multitude are fasting, and some may faint on the way: "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." (*Matt.* xv. 32.) For this reason He gives them food, having miraculously multiplied a few loaves of bread.

To comprehend thoroughly the generosity of the Heart of Jesus in all the calamities that befall mankind, we should be compelled to transcribe every one of the Gospels, which are nothing more than a history of His kindness to us. And even this would not be adequate; for, if it is easy to judge, from its effects, that the Sacred Heart is the seat of compassion, who can form an idea of the perfection with which it exists there?

2. The Apostle does not content Himself with this positive proof of the kindness of the Divine Heart; he finds another still more striking in the fact that Jesus experienced in Himself all our miseries, sin excepted. "Tried in all things in like manner, without sin." (*Heb. iv. 15.*) Jesus experienced them, and all of them, in a more lively manner than ever happened to any mortal. Consider, afflicted souls, all the interior and exterior pains that can torment the body, or rend the heart, infirmities, grief, anguish, loss of friends, calumnies, persecutions, affliction of spirit, outrages, sentence of death, atrocious sufferings, accompanied by wearisomeness, sadness, bitterness, everything that can add to misfortune, and you will see that there is not one of these evils, which has not been undergone either by His Body or His Divine Heart. The most poignant sufferings of this life and those

we feel most acutely are the pangs of poverty, the want of food necessary for our children; but let those families that languish, take courage, for Jesus has already undergone this trial; He suffered from hunger, thirst, want, and after the labors of the day, had no shelter for the night. Justly did He say of Himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." And say not, wretched parents, that what weighs heavily upon you is not your own sufferings, but you are most troubled at seeing your children languishing around you, whilst you are unable to give them a morsel of food. Jesus suffered as much, when He saw His Apostles, whom He loved more dearly than any father loves his child, forced to pluck the ears of grain by the roadside, in order to appease somewhat their hunger, against which His poverty did not allow Him to provide. To be the target of hate, calumny, unjust persecution, and this even from our friends, is less bearable than poverty; what Jesus has endured on this head makes up the history of His whole life. Who was ever hated more? Who was ever calumniated more, persecuted more, more subject to reproaches? "I am a worm and no man; the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." (*Ps. xxi. 7.*) Amid these

persecutions and calumnies, to see friends, neighbors, those upon whom He has bestowed favors, become His bitterest enemies, was His most poignant affliction: and Jesus saw the unfaithfulness of St. Peter, the treason of Judas, the flight of the Apostles. He counted among His enemies those whom He had instructed with fatherly love, or for whom he had cared with infinite charity. Well instructed and learned men take nothing so much to heart as the loss of reputation and honor; and Jesus was grossly calumniated and dishonored in regard to His knowledge and doctrine. Upright and virtuous men feel nothing more keenly than to be considered immoral; and yet Jesus was accounted a lover of good cheer and a friend of publicans. Just men, loyal to their duty, cannot bear to have their devotion to legitimate authority called in question; and Jesus was called the enemy of Cæsar; He was styled seditious. A pious person cannot endure to see himself placed among the indevout and irreligious; Jesus was reckoned a blasphemer and an enemy of God.

Jesus decreed that His humanity should not be subject to bodily infirmities, but He did not by this exclude bodily sufferings; for every kind of suffering, which the body can undergo, was concentrated in His passion. He took every torment on

Himself: the sufferings He endured were, in a word, so numerous, so cruel, so atrocious, that, overcome by them, He gave up His soul in a sea of blood.

This Heart was long taught in the school of sufferings; its first pulsations were amid crosses, it lived among crosses, it died on a cross. Now, if long and cruel sufferings serve to render even us more kind and compassionate, what should we not look for from the compassion and love of this loving Heart? Ah, exclaim so many afflicted souls, who will enable us to find a heart that appreciates our misfortunes, that feels them, has pity on them! Such a prize would take away half of our evils. Cease to complain henceforth; for, this heart that you seek for in vain among men, you may find whenever you so desire it, in Jesus Christ. He has undergone everything; to His natural compassion, to that benevolent character which is peculiar to Him, to that infinite charity that distinguishes Him, He adds the experience of suffering. Give yourselves to His Heart, entrust to Him all the troubles of your position, whatever it may be; place your heart in His; He wishes it, He invites you in the most affectionate manner: "Come to me all ye who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (*Matt. xi. 28.*) Do this,

and you will find out by experience what great consolations may be drawn from the Sacred Heart.

3. The only true balm of the afflicted is that drawn from the Sacred Heart. Here we find a consolation which, whilst comforting, does not tarnish the soul. Is it not true that we rather aggravate and multiply our evils by having recourse, as it often happens, to unworthy means? We ask for some assistance from creatures, and we find that not unfrequently a new misfortune is added to the sum of our miseries. We seek for consolation from our friends, and our friends are like those of Job — a burden. We divert ourselves by yielding to dissipation, by taking part in festivities, by going to theatres; and what happened to that king who gratified all his passions, is verified in our regard — after the wrong and excitement, we have naught left but affliction of spirit. Some persons too readily make use of the wine-cup, in order to drive care away; but all in vain; for, the remorse they experience, the chastisements they draw upon themselves, cause them to see the poison hidden at the bottom of the golden goblet. And this is not surprising. They ask for light from darkness, treasures from want; they desire to quench their thirst at empty cisterns: thus it is that they add new bitterness to their sorrows. The

person who seeks for assistance from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is not treated in this manner; he seeks for light from the Divine Sun; for treasures at the source of infinite riches; for refreshment at the living fountain; he cannot but find what he desires. What is God's intention in sending us sufferings? Our Lord does not take pleasure in our troubles, but He permits them, that we may detach ourselves from creatures, and, especially, from ourselves, and draw more closely to Him, and unite ourselves to Him more and more. But if this is the end proposed by our sweet Jesus in the afflictions He sends us and permits to be heaped on us; if these are His loving designs in our tribulations, it is evident that nothing can be more agreeable to Him, than to see us have recourse to His divine Heart, whilst, at the same time, we practise eminent acts of virtue. A soul that turns from the depth of its misery to the Heart of Jesus, tends to elevate itself above the trifles of the world, to rise superior to the troubles of life, to break the bonds that hold it captive to the earth. Such a soul practises a sublime act of confidence, by trusting entirely to the noblest object that faith proposes; it takes possession of some of the graces, which abound in the Sacred Heart. Plunged into this abyss, the understanding finds certain rays of a

wonderful light, by which is shown the nothingness of the riches which it has not. A hidden treasure is found under what the world regards as an evil; the value of privation and sacrifice becomes conspicuous; the danger of prosperity and vain joy is seen. Here we shake off those ideas that pervert the world, those errors and illusions which are the fruitful cause of our tribulations. Then the will, enlivened, inflamed, strengthened by ~~t'~~ heavenly fire, loses the attachments once held dear, and loves what it once hated; it detests the thing formerly sought most eagerly, and embraces the object which it at one time cast away. Hence it happens, that what was insupportable and full of bitterness, becomes easy and agreeable.

We may obtain such assistance in the Sacred Heart; assistance real and solid, since it enlightens our minds and removes our prejudices, teaches us truth and fills us with the noblest and purest sentiments, worthy of the Sacred Heart.

4. Let no one imagine that this aid is too mystical and too spiritual to be efficacious; this were a serious error; for, the peculiar character of the consolations coming from this Heart is, that they go to the heart. We know by experience that a person in great affliction finds no comfort in exterior things. Music has no charms for him; the vain

amusements of the world attract him not, because all these things appeal to the senses, and, in fact, do not reach the soul, which is the part needing comfort, as it alone is wounded and in suffering. Where can it obtain true consolation? If it is not possible to pluck out the thorn and heal the wound, no other means is left but to cause the sweet and firm persuasion to possess the soul that whatever oppresses and torments it, is, in the order of heavenly things, a real good, or may be such, provided one so wills it. The power this persuasion will have of changing thorns into roses, or, at least, of rendering the thorns less piercing, is incredible. Now, this can be done nowhere more efficaciously than in the Heart of Jesus, not only on account of that admirable light which beams from it, as we said elsewhere, but because we read there, in unmistakable characters, what is the value of suffering, what merit is obtainable through it. Few in this world know the secret virtue of the troubles of life. This is the most precious part of the science of the Saints. In this Heart it is impossible not to see this truth. Indeed, this is a Heart that concentrates in itself all imaginable sufferings, and in the highest degree; it receives them not of necessity, but of its own choice. In order to perform this astounding work,

it suspends the effects of the beatific vision. In the presence of this Heart, we are forced to the conclusion that the afflictions we have, come they from men or from demons, from ourselves or from God, are only marks of His merciful goodness, who conducts us in this manner to the fulfilment of His ends. What is more, in tribulation our heart begins to have some resemblance to that of our Saviour. What a source of consolation for a faithful soul! This fact is more easily meditated on than explained. If all good in this life depends on a perfect conformity of ourselves to Jesus Christ, of our heart with His; if every hope of acquiring virtue, merit, or any degree of perfection, is placed in this Heart; if in it is our trust of obtaining beatitude; if the only way by which we can arrive at salvation, according to the Apostle, is by conformity to Jesus Christ: "Whom He foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformable to the image of His Son," who can tell the encouragement the soul will have, when it sees this conformity begun, though imperfectly, in itself, and a slight progress made towards perfection? These truths will by no means be understood by one who is never, or at most, little concerned about his salvation or sanctification: the man that reflects upon the short time of his sojourn on this earth, in order

to prepare for himself an eternal resting-place in heaven, cannot but have great consolation in them.

5. The Sacred Heart is a refuge and a sovereign consolation amid all the tribulations that may befall us; but since this truth has already been demonstrated by the reasons alleged before, I shall now mention two most serious evils, which have an especial remedy in the Sacred Heart.

The first and most terrible evil that can come upon man is the slavery of sin. In the world, and even among Catholics, there are immense numbers of persons weighed down by this burden, with this difference, however, that some souls, totally unmindful of their salvation, never think of shaking off this degrading yoke, or they bear it willingly, and even boast of their bonds; whilst others, slaves of Satan, either from the effect of bad habits or on account of occasions that surround them, or some other cause, bewail their deplorable state; they wish, though perhaps with a feeble desire, to break the chains of evil habits and sinful occasions. Now, if it were possible for a ray from the divine Heart to shine on the first class, who in their perversity neither know, nor care to know their wretchedness, there is no doubt that the "mountains would melt away;" but this much is certain in regard to the second—that is, those who at

least are conscious of their misfortune: ready recourse to the Sacred Heart is the most efficacious means which they can make use of to break their bonds, and regain the liberty of the children of God. They stand in need of powerful succors and abundant graces. Where will they find these graces, if not in their true source? Have we not shown that all these graces are centred in the Sacred Heart, which is the treasury of the whole Church? It remains to be seen whether Jesus is willing to grant this boon to the sinner who has recourse to Him. But can a sinner, who asks for strength to renounce his sin, who asks for it from the Sacred Heart, that loved sinners so dearly, even to the excess of being pierced by the lance; from this Heart which is all charity, fear that he may be unheard? God grant that the sinner would only try it. Immediately he would be indued with new strength, and, enlightened from above, and reëncouraged, would again enjoy the friendship of God, to be retained forever. Christian reader, if you are in sin, resolve, for the love of Jesus Christ, to make a trial of the efficacy of the Sacred Heart; prostrate yourself at the Saviour's feet; pray Him, by His infinite sweetness, to show in your regard what He can accomplish; offer Him, to this end, the sincerest homage of

your heart; and above all present to Him, as a compensation for your offences, the homage, tears, and prayers of the Heart of Mary, your most holy Mother. No offering will be more agreeable. Rest assured, that with this in your hands, you will never be refused, no matter how great your misery may be.

6. There is another class of persons: those who proceed generously in the path of virtue, and strive to love God perfectly. It rarely happens that these souls are not, sooner or later, after a period of fervor, more or less remarkable, submitted to severer trials, by which the Lord wishes first to purify His servants, and then prepare them for more ardent love. The least misfortune that can happen them is sometimes the loss of wealth, or some corporal malady; this is the least misfortune, because, beholding, by means of interior light, the nothingness of worldly goods, they find it easy to reconcile themselves to the change. A severer trial may come, and it is this: the very light that renders them tranquil in this case causes the affliction of spirit, to which God subjects them, to be more poignant and bitter. Detached from earthly goods, in order to concentrate their every affection on Jesus, and apply themselves to the acquisition of spiritual and eternal goods, they

cannot but appreciate, in a more lively manner, the fear of having offended Jesus, and lost all they held dear. And these are trials that they avoid with difficulty. God, if we may judge from the lives of nearly all the Saints, after having tried His servants in other ways, sends them this new kind of trial, for various reasons worthy of His wisdom, and especially in order that, detached from all sensible and exterior things, they may be detached from themselves. This conquest over self is of vital importance. He allows them, therefore, to be beset with trouble of mind, unrest, scruples, anxieties, fears, and a thousand other afflictions. One who has not experienced this unhappy state can scarcely form an idea of it. Some souls go so far as to believe themselves abandoned of God; that all they do displeases Him; that their hearts not only do not burn with the fire of charity, but that they are devoid of faith and hope; that their present life is a delusion, and their past a perpetual deceit; that the efforts they make to practise virtue are only a deceptive veil, by whose aid they will hide from themselves and others their own malice; that consequently hell is already open under their feet, and the only thing needed to precipitate them into this abyss, is for God to permit the demon to deprive them of life.

These and such like troubles do they experience, with more or less violence. If you add to these the efforts of the demon to make them yield to distrust and despair, and the horrible suggestions to commit the most shameful sins, for which they have the greatest horror; the spirit of blasphemy even, that sometimes threatens to draw them away from God; the numberless other diabolical illusions to which they are continually exposed, you will see that the poor human heart is weighed down, and on the point of being lost in an ocean of afflictions.

Is it to be doubted that souls in this state stand in need of encouragement? It is true that there are ministers of God, particularly empowered to sustain and direct them, and that, consequently, recourse should be had to these envoys of the Almighty. But if this assistance prevents them from groping in darkness, and helps them to persevere in the combat, they know, nevertheless, that the encouragement received is sometimes very trifling, and that very frequently the minister of the Saviour, instead of calming, rather increases their troubles. Moreover, another succor is necessary: the evil is in the heart, and a heart is needed to alleviate it: a heart to receive it kindly; a heart to hear it with compassion; a heart capable of

gaining its confidence; a heart quick to labor in its behalf; a heart rich enough in strength and love to be able and willing to give assistance. The Heart of Jesus is such a heart; by its excellent and ineffable gifts it contains the balm proper for the wound. And, indeed, is it not the Heart of Him "who overlooks the sins of men that they may repent;" of Him who took upon Himself our miseries, in order to make us free? "He shall bear their iniquities." (*Is. liii. 11.*) Have we another consoler equal to this one, or in any way like Him? Let these afflicted souls, then, arise from the depths of their misery, from the midst of interior darkness, and cast themselves into the open side of the God of love, and they will there breathe again, take new vigor, and find a remedy for all their evils. They fear the divine anger aroused against them; but since they have recourse to the Sacred Heart, they make an appeal from divine justice to divine mercy, and thus they will be reassured in regard to the principal object of their terror. They groan under the weight of their miseries and infidelities, which the infernal spirit and a troubled imagination greatly exaggerate; in this Heart they will find unequalled mercy, which will shine forth in proportion to their wretchedness; so that the very burden that oppresses them

will be a new source of confidence. They are cast into a thick darkness, and can only grope their way; from this Heart bright rays dart forth to dissipate it. They are the sport of the demon who afflicts and torments them by suggestions and artifices without number; this Heart is the tower of safety and the city of refuge. They are afraid of losing, amid so many struggles and temptations, the way of salvation; this Heart, by its excessive bounty and infinite kindness, is the most proper instrument to arouse their confidence and strengthen them against all dangers.

We are no longer permitted to doubt that this amiable Heart wishes to grant help to those who need it; for though the confidence with which we abandon ourselves to it will cause us to triumph infallibly, yet we have also an earnest of its benevolence in its ancient mercies, accorded to every one that had recourse to it; we have an earnest in the favors we have already received; in the honor of Jesus, so deeply interested in the matter; in the solemn and unmistakable promises which He has made, to refuse no one addressing himself to this divine Heart. From these pledges on the part of Jesus there arises, very frequently, encouragement so efficacious that the soul is entirely calmed, and the heart reposes in peace; at

other times, the darkness is dissipated, or at least rendered supportable; the soul is interiorly strengthened, and disposes itself to receive all that God may prepare for it; it bears up patiently and resignedly, and turns every trial into an increase of love and merit.

7. Finally, that the Sacred Heart lives and throbs for us only, is the most convincing proof of its being an inexhaustible source of consolation. In the Incarnation, Jesus, having a human nature, was given to the whole human race; in the Eucharist, He wished to extend this donation, as the holy Doctors say, with still greater liberality. In the former case, He was given to all in common; in the latter, He gives Himself to each individual. He was present for only a few years in the former; in the latter, his presence is permanent. Then He lived in a certain part of the world; now He is present in all the churches of the world. The end of the first gift was to repair our ruin, to enchain the powers of hell, to give ample satisfaction to divine Justice, to redeem the human race; but after the accomplishment of His purpose, what could any longer keep Him on this earth? Let us see, pious souls, what it was. Ask yourselves what was the motive of His tarrying with us. To regulate the course of the heavens? to sustain the

earth? to govern empires and kingdoms? to distribute justice among the children of men? His presence in the Sacrament was not necessary for the accomplishment of this end: God does it by His supreme power: "He hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth." (*Is. xl. 12.*) Did He wish to acquire additional merits, and gain a new life for men? By a single offering, which He made on the cross, He accomplished the sanctification of all men: "By one offering He hath perfected forever those who are sanctified." (*Heb. x. 14.*) And in order to apply these merits, to say nothing of so many inventions known to divine wisdom, there were sufficient sacraments; there was a sufficient sacrifice without His permanent presence on the altar. Find, if you can, any satisfactory reason. The only reason is, that the secret interests of His Heart kept Him here below. On this earth He has souls to press to His bosom, to love and console. To exercise His justice, providence, mercy, and other infinite perfections, He stood not in need of mysteries; to content His Heart the presence of His holy Humanity was necessary. Hence we deduce this important consequence, that as Jesus at Bethlehem and Nazareth is particularly a hidden and humbled God, to be an example to men; that, as in Judea and in the

temple, He is a divine teacher of religion and virtue; on Calvary a victim offered to the Father; in the valley of Jehoshaphat, the judge of the living and the dead, so in the holy Eucharist, He is a God, residing with us, in order to see to the interests of His divine Heart; that is, to love, compassionate, console, bestow all kinds of graces on the souls of men.

If this does not suffice to fill us with joy; if this is not enough to inspire us with a sweet confidence in our discouragement, what will? Afflicted soul, recognize then the treasure you have in the adorable Heart of Jesus, and, whilst it offers you an inexhaustible source of joy, a joy pure and sincere; a joy that must ravish every one; cease to complain of your poverty and abandonment. Draw abundantly the waters of a holy joy from the fountains of the Saviour; leave there your grief, and take thence new strength, to finish the journey which remains, until you reach the goal, where this divine Heart, possessed without veil, will dry up your tears; where you will possess the fulness of heavenly delights.



CHAPTER XIV.

AN EASY WAY OF HONORING THE SACRED HEART
OF JESUS.

To know the Sacred Heart of Jesus by means of prayer and meditation — Practices for the Feast of the Sacred Heart and for the first Friday of the month — Practices for every day of the month — Other useful and easy practices.

WE have thus far endeavored to gather the scope of the devotion to the Sacred Heart; to this end we have considered it in itself and in the fruits which it produces. It is now time for us to sit down in the agreeable shade of this bountiful tree, in order to collect the fruits and enjoy them, according to the words of the spouse in the Canticles: "His fruit is sweet to my palate." What will it profit us to have contemplated this Heart for a long time, to the end that we might be moved to honor and love it, if we do not put our hand to the work and strive to labor for Jesus? We shall endeavor to show what must be done, though in truth this might be partly dispensed with, inasmuch as Jesus Himself becomes the inward teacher of those who offer and consecrate themselves to His service, and inspires them with

numberless ways of honoring the divine Heart. Experience teaches us that it is very profitable to have some one to direct us in the choice of the most practical and suitable means for the accomplishment of any work. We shall briefly sum up what the best authors have said on this subject.

1. First, the aspirant to this devotion to the Sacred Heart should earnestly endeavor to know it most intimately. It is impossible to strive after a good, which we do not care for, of which we are entirely ignorant. Two ways lead us to this knowledge: prayer and meditation.

In the first place, prayer is necessary, because, if it is the ordinary way of obtaining all graces, it must be eminently suited to the present case. When St. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, Jesus says to him: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father, who is in heaven." When the Jews were murmuring against Jesus, for saying that He had come down from heaven, Jesus said to them: "No man can come to Me, unless the Father, who sent Me, draw him." (*John* vii. 44.) Now, what do these answers mean, if not that divine grace is necessary in order to know and follow Jesus? It is, therefore, true that, without prayer, a soul will never know the sentiments, perfections, virtues and graces of

this Heart. Pray to the Father, who has so loved the world as to give it His only Son; ask for the grace of knowing the gift bestowed on you; pray to the Son, to know what leads to everlasting life; ask Him to remove the clouds of ignorance that overshadow you; pray to the Holy Ghost who formed this Heart and reposes in it with all His gifts; ask Him to give you knowledge of this Heart for the glory of Jesus Christ and the honor of the august Trinity.

A prayer so pleasing in the sight of God will be heeded. After repeating this prayer many times, and with our whole heart, it will be necessary to make use of the resources which are at hand, in order to heighten our esteem of so great a treasure. It will be proper, therefore, to read some of the numerous works written on this subject; to hear sermons about it; for these are the ordinary ways, which God uses, to draw us to Him. Above all, meditation on this divine Heart will be useful; and finally great advantage will accrue to us from our earnest endeavor to learn from the Sacred Heart those lessons, which it will never refuse to give to humble suppliants.

And this is not so difficult. Independently of the fact that there exists a number of books containing clearly developed meditations on this sub-

ject, the passion and death of our Saviour are capable, whenever thought on, of elevating us to the divine Heart. Entering this retreat by means of meditation, we shall there study the virtue we need to practise, and glorify the perfections we wish to honor. All the graces we require, we shall ask for in this Heart. Colloquies will never appear so sweet as those with the Heart of Jesus; for, it is not only when you look on Him as Father, Brother, Friend and Spouse, that His Heart seems full of sweetness, but also when you consider Him as Teacher, God and Judge, this Heart will always be the Heart of your amiable Jesus. It is essential for us to persuade ourselves of this fact, that the divine Heart really contains unspeakable treasures of graces, to possess which will be our sovereign good. But after all that has been said, I hope my pious reader may, far from doubting this fact, feel himself carried away by his desire to love and glorify the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

2. Among the many practices of honoring the Sacred Heart, the one which Christ asked of His servant, and which the Church has sanctioned, holds preëminently the first place. This practice is the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart on the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi.

Other solemnities were also instituted by the piety of the faithful: the first Friday of each month, and all the Fridays of the year.

In regard to the feast, it should be, undoubtedly, the principal one for the lovers of the Sacred Heart; since Jesus has desired that this day be particularly consecrated to the reparation of the insults He receives in the sacrament of love. It would be advantageous to prepare by a novena or triduum of pious practices, to end with a confession, which, if not a general confession or a review, should at least be made more diligently than usual. On the eve of the feast, it will be well to practise some special mortification, in order to excite our fervor; we should profit much by spending some time before the Blessed Sacrament, to the end that the fire of love may be aroused within us. Prostrate at the feet of Jesus, tell Him your willingness to spend the entire night before the altar, if He wills it; offer Him the adorations of the Angels, to make up for what is wanting in yours; so make your intention before retiring to rest, that your heart, throbbing in unison with the Heart of Jesus, may offer up continual acts of praise.

Finally, on the festival day, you will give free scope to your heart. The morning meditation

should be on the Sacred Heart; at least, we may make it the subject of a few pious reflections. The communion, which holds the first place among the devotional exercises, should be made with all possible fervor; and we should bear in mind that here there is no question of sensible fervor, so much as fervor of will. The acts of reparation and consecration have their place; in them the soul is carried away with the desire of offering some compensation for all the outrages heaped on the Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament, from the time of its institution down to our days. For this end, the soul is aroused to compunction, asks pardon, presents to Jesus the adorations of the Saints, the Angels, the Blessed Virgin, and the divine Heart itself. The soul, at the same time, consecrates itself to this amiable Heart, with all its faculties, thoughts, desires, in order to be entirely devoted to Jesus, and nevermore incur His displeasure.

During the day, if it can be done, visits to the Blessed Sacrament should be more frequent, in order to obtain more surely the end in view. If we are unable to make a visit in body, we may do so in spirit, endeavoring, by our transports of joy, by our ejaculations, to make reparation for numberless insults. Towards evening, spend some time

in the presence of Jesus Christ, or, at least, before a picture of the Sacred Heart, and there, after having begged pardon for the coldness and languor which you have shown, renew your resolution of always being faithful to His love. Arouse yourself to still greater zeal, even unto death, for the glory of His divine Heart. These, and similar acts, will fill up and sanctify this happy day.

Since Jesus Christ suggested to Blessed Margaret the propriety of honoring Him in an especial manner, on the first Friday of every month for nine months, and gave her reason to hope for the grace of final perseverance, as the fruit of this practice; all the clients of the Sacred Heart choose the first Friday for the renewal of their homage. The exercises might be in part the same as those for the festival, or like them. Besides, alms-giving, penance, fasting, and other works of Christian piety, are perfectly in keeping with the occasion. Let every one settle upon the practices suitable to his position, and they will be very acceptable to the Heart of Jesus. However, bear in mind that meditation, communion, acts of reparation and consecration, together with fervent visits to the Blessed Sacrament, ought to have the first place.

These exercises are performed somewhat in this way, on every Friday, by those who have leisure

for the purpose. Persons unable to communicate, have the custom of hearing mass on Friday ; and, during the mass, they make a spiritual communion, in which they offer and consecrate themselves especially to the Saviour. Moreover, they give themselves to various good works, which will be mentioned hereafter.

The Blessed Margaret, taught in these matters by our Lord Jesus Christ, gives this advice:—
“ Make an oratory of your heart, to enter therein and adore your loving Spouse. You will do this three times during the day. In the morning, in order to offer your homage of adoration and sacrifice to this adorable Heart, as to your Sovereign and Liberator, you will consecrate to Jesus whatever you will do and suffer, as well as your whole being, to the end that you may use it only for God's service and glory. You will enter this oratory at mid-day, to offer Him the homage of love and supplication ; you will show your poverty and distress, and all the wounds of your soul to Him, who is the sovereign remedy. In the evening, return to render your homage of grateful acknowledgment and thanksgiving for the favors received ; ask pardon, with sorrow, for all your ingratitude ; make a firm resolution to die rather than yield again to unfaithfulness. Besides, form a crown

of all the practices of the day; offer up this crown, in order to soothe the brow pierced by the thorns of your sins; pray Him to repair the evil you have done, by the good He has done in you. To take your repose in greater security, you will enter the sanctuary of the loving Heart of Jesus; lock yourself in with the key of confidence and total abandonment to His watchfulness."

3. We have just spoken of what may be done on appointed days during the year; but this were little, if our devotion stopped here. Whoever has been wounded by the arrows of so sweet a love as this, cannot be languid. Overcome by love, the soul is eager to give expression to its inward longings; hence it is that daily practices are determined on to bear testimony to the fervent aspirations of the heart.

We see, from what has been said, how a person may render the ordinary actions of a Christian life more meritorious. In the morning, the Christian is accustomed to thank the Lord for the favors he has received, and offer to Him all the actions of the day. Now, at the same time, you will begin to pay your tribute of homage to the Sacred Heart, offering yourself wholly to Him, taking up your abode in the divine Heart, to remain there all the day. And if we have an asylum in this

divine fortress, we shall not be so often taken by surprise, nor find ourselves so weak, so slothful on certain occasions.

Again, many persons have the custom of daily spending a certain time in meditation, for their greater spiritual advancement. May not these persons benefit themselves by pious colloquies with the Heart of Jesus, by colloquies which form so important a part of meditation? May they not do this independently of the meditations which they will make from time to time on the grandeurs of the Sacred Heart, its excellence, prerogatives, merits and treasures of graces? May they not in an especial manner converse with this Heart, offering their prayers and thanks to it; exciting themselves to good resolutions, to contrition, in a word, to all those acts which they are wont to elicit in meditation and prayer? They will find in this practice a confidence which they have never yet experienced; they will open up a living fountain of all kinds of graces, and perhaps on approaching this furnace of love, they will no longer have to deplore, as now so often happens, the dryness and coldness which they feel.

All the faithful hear mass on Sundays and feast days. Some hear mass every day. For the clients of the Sacred Heart, this is a most precious

time. Who can see renewed before his eyes the sacrifice of the Cross, as faith shows it to him, without rising in thought to the source of this wonder of devotedness, that is, to the Heart of Jesus? How can we adore this sacred flesh, without being wounded by the darts from the divine Heart? How can we see the mystical separation between the precious blood and the divine body, without remembering the love which was the instrument of the division? Whence come the graces which in our days are showered down on the Church, if not from the infinite liberality of this Heart? When the priest at the altar communicates, the pious faithful are wont to communicate; is there anything more becoming than, at that time, to unite one's self with the Heart of Jesus? The sacrifice of the mass is evidently the time best suited for adoring the divine Heart, for consecrating ourselves to it, and for offering up acts of reparation.

We are never more closely united with Jesus, than when we have the happiness of receiving Him in sacramental communion. Then are celebrated the unspeakable nuptials of the soul and Jesus. The divine Heart reposes on our earthly heart; and if there is no obstacle on our part, we are transformed into Jesus. Is it not something most

glorious for Jesus, most sweet and salutary for ourselves during these happy moments, when in sweet abandonment, engulfed in an abyss of love, we pray for graces of every kind? Thus the aspirant to this devotion approaches frequently the holy table, and receives our Lord with fervor. He approaches frequently; for, it is impossible to love this Heart, or aspire to love it, without longing after this divine food, best calculated to excite and inflame our love. He receives our Lord with fervor, since the affection he cherishes for this Heart perfects him in sentiments of humility, desire, compunction and love. Besides, these sentiments so necessary for receiving Jesus worthily, increase his fervor for future communions. From what we have said, one can easily see how all these pious exercises may be very usefully directed to the praise and glory of the Sacred Heart.

As often as we visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, whether exposed on the altar for the worship of the faithful, or enclosed as a prisoner of love in the tabernacle, we may make the Sacred Heart the object of our reparation and oblation. The same thing may be said of ejaculatory prayers, which pious persons make use of. It would be very profitable indeed, to address them to this divine Heart, in order to receive light, love, strength, ad-

vice, and other helps we stand in need of. Let us show some zeal in this, that we may contract a good habit and shake off our sluggishness. After this endeavor, we shall find the practice easy, and, at the same time, productive of the most abundant fruits.

4. Independently of the occasions mentioned above, the aspirant to this devotion does not forget to render the Sacred Heart a special tribute of homage. Though it may not be good to multiply these practices, for fear that they may be abandoned altogether, still, if there is discretion in them, they cannot but be sovereignly useful. A loving heart can each day, apart from any special occasion that calls for it, consecrate itself to the Sacred Heart, proposing to endure every trial and to put up with every cross for the sake of this beloved object. To make his devotion a hundred-fold more fervent, the lover of the Sacred Heart will often unite himself with the Heart of his tender Mother; he will unite his affections with those of the Angels and Saints in heaven, and of the holy souls that love this Heart and will love it for all eternity. He will call to his aid those Angels specially chosen to do homage to this Heart. He will multiply his acts of love by speaking about this devotion to others; by endeavoring to persuade

them to embrace it. He will meditate sometimes on the lovableness of the Sacred Heart, its riches, mercies and unceasing love. Other practices will be spoken of in the next chapter.

According to the circumstances in which we find ourselves, we may offer up our petitions to the Sacred Heart. It may be now a novena, now a triduum, now a visit, in order to avert some calamity or to obtain light, to gain some blessing for ourselves, or for our family. A good use may be made of the rosary of the Sacred Heart, of the litany, the acts of adoration and consecration, which the piety of the faithful has made so common, and the liberality of the Church has enriched with indulgences. If the Lord only deigns to give us His love, all will be well; for then we shall not fail of means, nor ask for appointed times to testify our devotion.

To gain more surely the goal, we should have some devout memorial of the Sacred Heart, a picture to recall it to our minds. "My divine Master," says Blessed Margaret, "assured me that He took an especial delight in seeing the interior sentiments of His Heart honored under the figure of a human heart, such as He showed me, and He wished a representation of it to be exposed publicly, to move the insensible hearts of men." How

beautiful it would be to see a picture of this kind in every Christian family! "Jesus told me at the same time," adds the servant of God, "that He would give abundant graces to those who honor this representation of the Sacred Heart; and that wheresoever this image would be exposed for public veneration, it would draw down numberless blessings." Why should not the heads of families have in their houses a picture of the Sacred Heart, and whilst venerating it, draw down a blessing from heaven on themselves and theirs? Why should they not do this, instead of having in their homes immodest figures, statues and pictorials, which sow poison and death in the hearts of their children?



CHAPTER XV.

OTHER PRACTICES IN HONOR OF THE SACRED
HEART.

To live in the Sacred Heart — To speak familiarly with Jesus in regard to our welfare — To imitate the virtues of the Heart of Jesus — To make reparation for the outrages on the love of Jesus — Practices peculiar to priests and religious — The worship of love for the Heart of Jesus.

ANY person devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus will derive great advantage without doubt from the practices mentioned in the preceding chapter. If there is any one zealous for practices of still higher perfection, and which, with God's assistance, will not be too difficult, we shall, whilst applauding this holy desire, endeavor to show him in what these practices consist, according to the expression of the Apostle: "Be ye zealous for the better gifts. And yet I show to you a more excellent way." (1 Cor. xii. 31.)

What are these practices? In a certain manner, to live and act always in the Sacred Heart, conformably to what the same Apostle says in another place: *for me to live is Christ*, (Phil. i. 21;)

so to converse with this adorable Heart, that our conversation may be in heaven; to imitate the virtues of this Heart, as was said before; to make reparation for the insults to which Jesus is exposed in the Blessed Sacrament; in a word, to give ourselves to the exercise of supernatural charity. These are the practices to which we call the attention of the zealous clients of the Sacred Heart. We shall speak of them in the following pages.

1. The first practice is to live in the adorable Heart of Jesus. Let none think that we are treating of a refinement of perfection, or of far-fetched mysticism. To live in the Sacred Heart is truly a great means of perfection, but one of extreme simplicity. To live in the Sacred Heart, means to dwell and act in the Sacred Heart; for, the soul remains and acts in that place, where the object it loves is found. So soon, pious soul, as you take up your abode in this blessed Heart, resolve to do everything for it, with the view of becoming acceptable to it. If you pray, resolve to pray in this Heart, and in union with it; if you work, resolve to work in this Heart, and with the intention of pleasing it. Are you at table? Propose to take your repast in this Heart. In conversation, think you are in this Heart, and if such

a thought is always uppermost in your mind, you will find that, with the grace of God, fewer faults will be placed to your account, though you may be otherwise inclined to commit them. If you take your rest, propose to take it in this Heart. In this wise, we can go through the actions of the day, and live constantly in this amiable Heart.

In this happy abode, in this furnace of love, the soul will be purified, perfected, entirely united with Jesus. In affliction, trouble, and persecution, which will surely come upon you, if you serve the Lord with your whole heart, what consolation will you not obtain from the Sacred Heart? True it is, that I suffer; but where do I suffer? In this Heart, which has endured everything for my sake, though I have given it many sources of suffering, by reason of my wanderings. And in humiliations, we may be exalted; for we can say, with the most consoling trust in this Heart: It is true, loving Heart, that I am culpable, and without Thy assistance, I had fallen into still greater faults; but, my sweet Jesus, the more ungrateful I have been, the more closely hast Thou pressed me to Thy Heart, seeing the great need I have of Thy protection and assistance.

If you are tempted to offend God ever so slightly, how will it be possible to yield to the

temptation, if you consider that you live in the Sacred Heart? Though the tempter make use of every means and employ every artifice to gain your consent to his wicked suggestions, will you yield, so long as you have your abode in this secure haven? Above all, what encouragement, what consolation in every circumstance of life, to suffer in this Heart, to combat in this stronghold, and to renew our strength therein. In this life, we must expect hard conflicts and moments of bitter grief; but nothing can prevail against him who lives in this impregnable fortress. Surrounded by furious enemies, the client of the Sacred Heart will ward off their blows, and enjoy perfect tranquillity in this habitation of peace.

2. If to live in this divine Heart insures entire security and every blessing, what may we not hope for by leading a life of familiarity with Jesus? Devout soul, you should aspire to this; you have resolved to live in the Sacred Heart; go further and unite yourself familiarly with it. Familiarity with Jesus is the sweetest nourishment of the Christian life. To this intercourse the Saints aspired; because it is the most efficacious means of attaining perfection. Can he who has consecrated himself to this Heart find any difficulty in this practice? As to Jesus, we know that He

desires, expects, and earnestly wishes us to be familiar with Him, since He has done so much to draw us to Himself. We are forced to confess this fact, lest it might be said that His side was not laid open, nor His Heart pierced for our sake. As to ourselves, what obstacle is in the way? Should we not be wretched, if separated from Him? Are we kept back by reason of the grievousness and number of our sins? These, on the contrary, are titles, which give us a special claim on the divine Heart: its glory is to be the hope of the unfortunate and the refuge of sinners. Have no fear of presenting yourself to it as often as possible, and of conversing familiarly with it in regard to your temporal and eternal interests; for familiarity with Jesus consists in this. The soul that loves this Heart, should speak with Jesus about all that belongs to it. As a matter of course, joy and sadness will be our lot during the day; but we should think of joy as coming from the divine Heart, by whose influence secondary causes act in our favor; sadness we must try to lessen by our intercourse with Jesus, by bearing with it, and conforming ourselves to His good pleasure. At other times, we shall have to overcome temptations and surmount difficulties; we must fly immediately to this Heart, in order to get help in the first place,

and in the second place, to attribute to it the honor of the victory. We so often stand in need of light to discover truth, and of generosity to embrace it; we shall have recourse to this beacon, which diffuses its rays and warmth on every side. The duties of our state of life give us abundant matter for colloquies with Jesus. For example, we want prudence in our doubts, strength to be patient, watchfulness to avoid the faults we so frequently fall into by the force of habit, energy and uprightness, to fight against our fallen nature; in fine, we are in need of help at every moment of the day. About all these matters the soul may usefully converse interiorly with the Sacred Heart. This practice is most highly recommended by Blessed Margaret in these words: "Whenever you are agitated and troubled by any fear, say to your soul: Why fearest thou? Thou hast the Heart of Jesus and His love; thou hast the treasure, the strength, the delight of heaven and earth. In suffering, say: I wish to suffer everything without repining; the Heart of Jesus does not allow me to fear anything. When you pray, enter the Heart of Jesus as a holy retreat; there you will find wherewith to fulfil your obligations to God, by offering up to Him the prayer of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, to supply the deficiency of yours.

You will love God with the love of the divine Heart; you will worship Him with its worship, praise Him with its praises, work with its works, and desire with its desires." Thus did the divine Teacher instruct this holy soul.

As it is good to begin an action by recourse to the divine Heart, so it is also good to renew your intention during the action, to the end that you may work entirely for Jesus, and offer your work to Him after its accomplishment. The father of a family may converse with this Heart, in regard to the maintenance of his family and the education of his children; the mother, in regard to the virtues she wants to inculcate, and the faults she desires to prevent or correct. The artisan will speak familiarly with this Heart about his trade; the merchant, about his goods; the public man, about his affairs; the soldier, about his perils; the magistrate, about his office; the priest, about his ministry; the religious, about his perfection; in a word, each will speak about what most nearly concerns him. Can we find a fitter object in which to put our trust, in the impulses that we are subject to, in the poignant grief or exultant joy that moves us so strongly? Can we speak of our anxieties, dangers and misfortunes to a worthier object? He who finds here below a true friend,

finds everything; for, he is sure to have in this friend a heart which will sympathize with him in his troubles, which will comfort, console, love, direct him, and be for him another self. Where is such a heart to be found, a heart capable of doing all this most wisely, a heart willing it efficaciously, and performing everything most sweetly? No other heart but that of Jesus, whose love for us knows no bounds, has these requirements.

May the Lord deign, in His unspeakable mercy, to make us understand how secure a haven we have in the Heart of Jesus; then we shall not be tossed about by the raging tempests that come upon us in the course of this miserable life. Were we to speak a little less with men, and a little more with Him, cares would be fewer, vexations lighter, want of confidence in God unknown; anger, curses and blasphemies unheard of. And this happy change would be the result of an humble recourse to the Sacred Heart, the aid and protection of which would be most powerfully felt by all.

3. Another practice should be joined to familiar converse with the Sacred Heart; and this practice is very highly esteemed by the most fervent lovers of Jesus. Perfect friendship causes an equality to spring up between those whom it binds together. The adorable Heart of Jesus neither can nor

should be conformed to ours; but ours should be conformed to His. One of the most earnest works of those intimately united with the Sacred Heart consists in this conformity, though we must not think our devotion unprofitable, if it goes not so far. This were an exaggeration. Perfection will beget perfect conformity. Having in view the fact that the highest degree of virtue is to be found in the divine Heart, we must try to copy this virtue as far as we are able, and with all the zeal so noble a model should excite. No one can tell how pleasing this practice will make us in the sight of Jesus. His divine Heart is inflamed with the desire of being most closely united with us; but if we do not remove every obstacle, and prepare our hearts, this union will never be perfect.

If, after beholding His humility, we crush down our proud nature, if, on account of His purity, we put a restraint on our senses, and in view of His detachment from earthly things, we sigh only after heavenly things, distance between us and Him will no longer exist, and He will give us the kiss of peace. Every step we take towards virtue and away from vice, is a tie, a chain that binds us strongly to Him. Perfect virtue will be the consummation of our union with Him. The aspirant to this salutary practice will, besides, find in the

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Sacred Heart all the virtues in keeping with his state of life; for, it is the model of all perfection and sanctity. Secular persons can here copy that orderly love due to the neighbor, that discreet regard for the interest of a family, and the way of living in the world, without being of the world. The religious will here find retirement, which is the soul of an interior life, and zeal, the life of the ministry. Secular priests have here sweetness, holiness, prudence, and reserve, virtues so necessary for their state. Virgins consecrated to God, as well as those who live in the world, by the study of the sentiments of the divine Heart, will learn how they must strive to please none but Jesus. In a word, every one will find here, if he desires it, the virtues in harmony with his state of life: and he will find them in so perfect a degree, accompanied by so great an abundance of graces, and endowed with attractions so enticing, that nothing will be dearer to him than the attempt to mirror them in his own actions.

If any one wishes to know a most especial and practical way of portraying in his own life the virtues of Jesus Christ, he will do well to read carefully the rule of life, which Blessed Margaret has left in this regard; and though she writes it chiefly for religious, nevertheless with a few trifling

changes it may be adapted to all classes of persons. We shall give it in her own words :

“In the morning, having put ourselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, we will ask her to present us to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in order that we may give honor to the offering which He there makes of Himself to the Eternal Father ; we will unite our souls with His, that He may preserve them from sin ; our hearts with His Sacred Heart, that He may destroy whatever is displeasing in them ; all that we are to all that He is, to supply our shortcomings.

“We will make our prayer in union with the one Jesus offers up for us in the Blessed Sacrament, and at the end of our prayer, we will present to God the petition of the divine Saviour for us in regard to our defects and distractions.

“During the divine office, we will unite our praises with those of Jesus. We will endeavor to make His intention our own, to supply whatever is wanting on our part before the Father. We shall consider the obedience that Jesus renders to the priest, whether good or bad, who offers Him up ; He places Himself in his hands to undergo a mystical death ; and without manifesting any repugnance, He allows Himself to be immolated and sacrificed according to the intention of the priest

who consecrates. To be conformed to Him, I must be prompt in obeying, and place myself as a holocaust in the hands of my superiors, no matter who they are; that, dead to my own will, inclinations, passions and aversions, I may be ruled according to their pleasure, and manifest, at the same time, no repugnance which I may feel. This violence to myself will be an honor done to Jesus, who disdains not to enter the souls of sinners, though He has so much horror at so doing, that each time He enters such a soul, He undergoes again, as it were, the deathlike agony of the Garden of Olives.

“His life in this Sacrament is wholly hidden from the eyes of creatures, who see nothing but the poor and mean appearance of bread. I will try to be hidden from the eyes of all; I will never be more joyful, than when I shall see myself poor and abject, in order to be always as one neglected amidst the humiliations, rebuffs and contempt of creatures. I will endeavor to comfort my Jesus in the midst of insults, sacrileges, profanations, and other indignities, which He bears with in this hidden life without ever uttering the least word of complaint. With this intention, I will never complain or excuse myself, thinking that every one has the right to accuse me, to humble me, and to

give me occasions of suffering; and since love of the Sacred Heart obliges me to undergo all this, I am content.

“Jesus is always alone in the Blessed Sacrament; His converse there is solely with God. To be conformed to Him, I will be alone, having my converse solely with Jesus; my understanding shall have no other curiosity but that of knowing Him; my heart shall experience no other ardor nor desire independently of love for Him. Jesus in the Sacrament undergoes a kind of death in regard to the life of the senses; I must imitate Him by renouncing whatever of life is dear to me and yielding no gratification to my senses.

“When I go to the refectory, I shall pray my Jesus to guard me from myself; I shall ask of Him that the nourishment I am going to take for love of Him and through obedience, may be as a spiritual communion, by means of which His grace will be bestowed on my soul and nourish it, and at the same time, inflame my heart with love.

“When I go to recreation, I will endeavor to recreate the Heart of Jesus by speaking of it, by consecrating all my words to the divine Word, to the end that I may not utter a syllable which may not be conducive to His glory. I must also, for the same reason, accept with a cheerful heart the

humiliations and contradictions that may occur during recreation.

“When I warm myself, I shall beseech Him who is the ardent furnace of pure love, to inflame our hearts so intensely with this divine fire, that, entirely aglow, they be all love for Him unceasingly.

“When I suffer from thirst, I must honor the thirst which the adorable Heart of Jesus has for the salvation of men; His thirst to be known, adored and loved by them in the Sacrament of Love.

“When I take my repose, I will unite it with that of my Saviour on the bosom of the eternal Father and in the Blessed Sacrament. I shall offer up to Him every respiration, every pulsation of my heart, to be in His sight, during my rest, as so many acts of love and sacrifice of my whole being. I will beg of Him that my repose may give me new strength to serve Him.

“When I have the happiness to receive Him in the holy Communion, I will frequently offer to the eternal Father the holy dispositions of the Heart of the Blessed Virgin, at the moment of the Incarnation of the Word; I will unite them to those of her divine Son, to make up for whatever is wanting to a worthy reception on my part; and

when I shall have received Him, I will offer Him to the eternal Father, in thanks, loving, adoration and praise. I will beseech the divine Saviour to remove all the defects of my soul, and do His will in my regard. I will, besides, ask of Him this favor, that as He has never transgressed the laws of His love in the holy Sacrament, He may prevent me from ever neglecting the observance of my rules. God be blessed."

4. We may now advance a little in our undertaking. After having spoken of familiarity with Jesus, and of the Christian virtues which have so strong a support and incitement in His Heart, it is time to find out the act or practice most acceptable, beyond all others, to the divine Heart. Now, by recalling what we have already said, it is not hard to know what Jesus had chiefly in view in this devotion. He wishes some amends for the outrages offered to His love, and this amends must be made by more fervent love. Such is the desire which He has manifested with His own lips, and to this the devotion ultimately tends. It is proper, therefore, to give the practice of honorable reparation the preference before all others. And it will not seem strange that Jesus puts so much stress on this reparation, if we consider attentively in what it consists.

What do we mean by the word reparation? Reparation signifies first of all, that a person has formed a very high idea of the infinite titles of Jesus to our love, whether considered in Himself, or in the favors He has bestowed on man; and, secondly, that, alive to the wrong done Him by those who, instead of loving, offend Him, he strives earnestly to make amends for this grievous fault. Sinners deprive Jesus of His prerogative of honor, respect, and submission, which is due to Him from the hearts of all men. To make amends in this case, is, in some sort, to seat Him again on His throne, and avenge the insult by devout homage. It is evident that reparation implies an act of profound respect for the unspeakable greatness of Jesus, and for His claims to the entire submission of creatures. This is the kind of honor that He spoke of, when He asked to be the sole object of our adoration, and wished all hearts to be consecrated to Him.

Reparation implies also a love equal to the esteem had of Him; for, only a motive of love can give rise to holy zeal for the interests of Jesus Christ. As a respectful son sometimes pleads the cause of a brother, who has offended a common mother, and asks her to grant pardon; as a faithful subject appears before his sovereign, to give

him stronger proofs of his fidelity, when others are faithless; as a husband redoubles his kind attentions toward his wife, to compensate for the insults she has received from a miscreant: so the devout lover of the Heart of Jesus asks for pardon, humbles himself; loves, adores this Heart, and offers it most fervent homage, to compensate, in some way, for the contempt, irreverence, unfaithfulness, blasphemy, in a word, for every outrage, that Jesus endures during the day.

In this practice all the Christian virtues, and all the affections of the Saints, are exercised. Faith is here; for, it tells us who Jesus is, what claims He has to the love of creatures, and, above all, His wonderful condescension for us in the mystery of the Eucharist. Charity is here, which would fain not see so much goodness repaid by so much ingratitude and indifference; zeal, which longs ardently to make reparation to the glory of Jesus Christ as far as is possible, and seeks unceasingly after new means of increasing the worship due to Him, and gaining Him new adorers. By these acts, sorrow for sin is excited, since we see how infinitely good a God we have offended. The fervor of the virtue of religion, which holds so prominent a place in everything that concerns the service of God, is manifested; and devotion, not only

in the exterior, but true, solid, sincere devotion, which is not only prompt itself in the service of God, but wishes to see every one else animated by the same fervor, and is sorrowful when it is not so. In a word, it is a practice of most pure love of Jesus, and a most safe rampart against the attacks of the enemy.

You should resolve to make reparation not only on the occasions above mentioned, as when we propose to honor the divine Heart in an especial manner, for example, during Communion, Mass, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament; but on all occasions, I was about to say, at every hour; for, ejaculations to the Sacred Heart may become an act of reparation.

It is very useful to offer up to Jesus the adoration and homage He has received, and still receives from all the just on earth, from all the Saints in heaven, and, especially, from the amiable heart of Mary, in order to make some compensation for the insults to His love. It is certain that no heart was so like the Heart of Jesus in gifts, graces, virtues, and sentiments as that of Mary; no heart was ever purer or dearer to His infinite Majesty. Therefore, when we offer to Him the heart of His Mother, we offer the object of His most tender affections. It is to recall to Him the gentle cares,

the kind services received at her hands, as also the purity and intensity of her love for Him. Can we find anything better, with which to make amends to our divine Saviour for the ingratitude of men ?

If it is right to do what we have just mentioned, at all times and on all occasions, it must be particularly so in those circumstances in which Jesus is especially offended and insulted. If you see a church profaned, if you hear curses, blasphemies, improper words, turn quickly to the Sacred Heart ; and since the world is given up to its amusements and profane festivals, sources, alas ! of too frequent disorders and scandals, redouble your fervor, visit Jesus Christ in His Churches, and strive, by your acts of reparation to the divine Heart, to give Him consolation in the midst of these affronts. In a word, uniting yourself familiarly with Jesus, embrace with zeal and love the interests of His glory. As you have reason to rejoice with Him at seeing Him known, loved, and glorified by men, so you ought to deplore bitterly the attempts of the wicked against His glory, and offer Him a recompense of love.

5. The practices mentioned hitherto are suited to everybody. There are two classes of persons, who can honor Jesus with an especial worship.

Of these persons we must say a few words. The first is composed of religious; the second of priests, both secular and regular.

Religious, no matter what the world may think, have always been and always will be, to use the language of the Saints, the brightest ornament of the Church, the most beautiful flower of the mystical garden, the honor and glory of the Catholic religion, the special love of Jesus Christ. And is it not just that these souls, elevated to the sublime dignity of spouses of the divine Word, should show a singular love for their heavenly Spouse? Can they testify their love in a better manner than by honoring His divine Heart? Are they not children of the predilection of this Heart? May they always more highly appreciate their condition! The practices already indicated become them perfectly; but they should not be satisfied with these, for other means are at their disposal. On Friday they might add to a more fervent communion some exercise of piety, as the recitation of the rosary of the Sacred Heart, acts of reparation and consecration. The nine offices composed by Blessed Margaret and intended to be put in practice by as many persons, who, united together, add their praises to those of the Angels, to glorify the Sacred Heart, might be made use of; and who

can make a better use of these offices than those persons, whose duty it is to do here on earth what the Angels do in heaven? Again, they should have the solemn celebration of the feast, preceded by a novena in their churches. As for those engaged in the education of youth, let them endeavor to inspire these simple hearts, committed to their care, with veneration and love for the Sacred Heart. Let them go further in their zeal and try to spread this devotion among those with whom they come in contact, their relations and acquaintances. I say nothing of the special effort they should make to imitate the divine virtues of this Heart. If all these practices are not sovereignly becoming to persons who live in familiar intercourse with the divine Master, in whom else shall they be so?

Priests, both secular and regular, form the second class of which we spoke. They can honor the Sacred Heart in various ways in keeping with their state. It is their office to be engaged in the holy mysteries of the altar; and when they perform this solemn duty, they can speak lovingly with the divine Heart; for the adorable body of Jesus is in their hands. They have to exercise the sacred ministry for souls; in this they have a means of sweetly drawing the just to the Sacred Heart,

in order to sanctify them still more; and of winning, by its gentle sway, the sinner from his evil ways. Above all, it would be salutary, for reasons given already, to entrust to this Heart souls carried away by brutal passions, the worldly, the proud, the licentious, the irreligious. Preachers of the word of God can make the devotion known, and cause the faithful to embrace it, by showing its excellence and the precious fruits to be derived from it. And if, moreover, the pastors of souls, by God's assistance, find means of exposing an image of the Sacred Heart on the altar and of forming a confraternity in its honor, who can tell the spiritual good the people will derive therefrom, and the glory that will accrue to Jesus Christ? We should not believe it, did we not see, every day, how greatly the sight of such images arouses the fire of divine love. In presence of this Heart, every one recalls what Faith teaches in regard to Jesus Christ; especially His goodness and love; and this remembrance is accompanied by so much sweetness, that the heart is deeply touched and tears of joy often give testimony to the happy emotion. Young persons renounce before this Heart their improper indulgences; they learn lessons of Christian propriety at the source of infinite purity. Parents see here the haven for their children; and the aged,

the place in which to end their days in peace. By means of the devotion to the Sacred Heart, the faithful are induced to approach the sacraments more frequently, since they are invited to receive them on the first Friday, or on the first Sunday of the month: and more than once have we had the happiness of seeing entire populations brought back to a knowledge and love of Jesus by this means. Now, why may not a minister of God, who has chosen Jesus Christ for his inheritance, and wishes to be wholly His, aspire to so great a merit in His sight?

6. Finally, the object and end of this devotion, which we have endeavored to inculcate, is love for Jesus; and the means of attaining this end, is to love and venerate the Sacred Heart. Who then will not desire to please and love it? Many persons, however, have not this holy yearning. Some have it not from insensibility; others, from negligence; the greater part of mankind, from the fact that their affections are centred on other objects; whilst a few good, but excessively timid, souls, fearing their unworthiness, do not aspire so high. Thus it happens that our life, which was given for loving God, passes away without love. Thanks be to God, it is otherwise with those who are devoted to the Sacred Heart. Let them endeavor to dedi-

cate to its service all the powers of their souls. In truth, he who regards the qualities, prerogatives and virtues connected with the love of the Sacred Heart, will be entirely taken up with the desire of loving, glorifying and consoling it, even at the price of his blood and life; indeed, this desire will become a kind of infatuation, if we may be allowed the term. But since human weakness prevents us from going so far; at least, let us offer it the highest degree of love we are capable of.

Love this Heart with the love of preference, so that you place this love above what you have for all the goods of this life. It is not possible to prefer anything to this divine Heart, when we are aware of the priceless treasures it contains. Love this Heart with the love of complacence; for, by means of this love, we become sharers in the homage offered it by the Angels and Saints in heaven, and all the lovers of the divine Heart here below.

Love it with the love of benevolence, by cherishing in your own heart an ardent desire that the hearts which love and adore it, may be multiplied without end, and that the number of noble souls, engaged in propagating the devotion and heralding forth the infinite perfections of the Heart of Jesus, may increase day by day.

Love it with the love of confidence, by having recourse to this amiable Heart in the afflictions and tribulations that may beset you ; for, it is impossible that confidence should fail to obtain from it all the graces necessary for the good of our souls.

Love it with the love of thanksgiving ; a love which you may especially practise by animating and encouraging yourself to overcome all the obstacles to the propagation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the gaining of more clients for it ; and this you may do, out of gratitude for what you have received from it.

Love it with the love of resemblance, by endeavoring to copy this divine Heart by an entire conformity of sentiments and affections, through the assistance of God's grace. Love it with a penitent love ; weeping, lamenting, and deploring the fact that you have had so little love for this amiable Heart, have been so slow in consecrating yourself to it, and have manifested such coldness towards it.

Love it with tender love, by means of which you will sympathize with this Heart full of love, which has to endure so much from the ingratitude and coldness of men ; and console it by a more fervent love.

In this manner, as well as in many more, we can show our love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Each

person may take one of these practices, or several of them, as light from on high, or disposition of mind will suggest. And thus we shall not only give proof of our sincere love for the adorable Heart of our Lord, but also find, in these practices of devotion towards it, foretaste here on earth of what, through the merits of this divine Heart, we hope for in heaven, where there will be entire and perfect contentment.*

* If any one desire to form a Confraternity in honor of the Sacred Heart, it may be done very easily. First, he must ask his Bishop for permission to do so; secondly, he must send an authentic copy of this permission to Rome, *Santa Maria ad Pineam*; thirdly, he will receive from Rome the Diploma of aggregation which makes him a sharer in all the indulgences granted by the Sovereign Pontiffs to the Confraternities of the Sacred Heart; fourthly, together with the Diploma he will receive a copy of the rules regarding the erection of a Confraternity and the practices peculiar to it.

The same advantages can be even more easily attained by establishing in the parish, the school, seminary, college or community, the Association of the Apostleship of Prayer, to which are granted all the Indulgences of the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart, besides many special favors. For this purpose, application must be made either to the General Director, Rev. H. Ramiere, at Notre Dame de Fourvière, Lyon, France, or to any of the Directors appointed for different countries: in the U. S., to Rev. B. Sestini, Woodstock, Howard Co., Md.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

AT last, pious reader, we have reached the end of this little work, intended for the propagation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. What remains to be done? We must begin in good earnest to love and glorify this Heart. For all else will be as nothing, if we do not give ourselves resolutely to the practice of this love. But who is there that, after having found out and understood the priceless treasures contained in this adorable Heart, will refuse to love it? Be the inclinations of our hearts whatsoever they may, they will find in the Sacred Heart an object sufficiently enticing. If you are charmed by the unspeakable grandeurs of the Saviour, where will you find them attended with more sublimity than in the divine Heart? Wisdom, love, power and goodness shine forth in all the works of God. Wisdom gives the design, love approves, power executes, and goodness preserves the work. This Heart is the most beautiful and ravishing conception of eternal wisdom; since in it are united all the virtues and gifts of the Sacred Humanity of the Saviour with

the infinite treasures of the Divinity. It is the object of the most tender complacency of the Almighty; for, whilst He finds not on this wretched earth an object worthy of Him, the Sacred Heart is for Him a garden of delights, a temple and an altar on which He receives true worship and perfect offerings, an ark containing a manna of heavenly sweetness; so much does He love this Heart, that through it alone He loves other hearts. The power of God is nowhere attended with more splendor than in the Sacred Heart. His power was not more wonderful when He formed the vault of heaven and created the earth, when He hurled the rebellious angels into the abyss, nor when He rules the universe by the strength of His arm; for, in this Heart, by the wonder of His omnipotence, He has caused a created Heart to be united to the Divinity in an ineffable manner, and to possess all its treasures. I say nothing of His goodness, for, it is in the Sacred Heart as in its source and in its fulness. He who does not perceive it there, will not find it elsewhere. Let me ask you this question: If this amiable Heart is capable of fixing the attention of the most holy Trinity, and of eliciting from it a most perfect love, why should we remain unmoved in the presence of an object so lovable? Will not that suffice for us, which suffices for God?

If we are less moved by the nobleness of the object than by the gratitude we owe it and the utility we derive from it, have we not seen what we venerate in the Sacred Heart? Is it not the fulness of that love with which Jesus, as God, has loved us before all ages, and, as the Word made flesh, from the first moment of the Incarnation, with the intention of always loving us? Will not an eternity of love suffice to gain our love for a day?

If numberless services are able to gain our love; who has been more prodigal of them in your regard than Jesus? If a savage had employed every moment of his life for our good; if he had dedicated to it every thought of his mind, every pulsation of his heart, every word that he had spoken, every labor of his hands, every footstep of his wandering life, every tear he had shed, every grief and infirmity, in fine, every drop of his blood; we should feel compelled to love him, and the whole world could not hinder us from doing it. The divine Heart, for having done all this in our regard, claims our love. It has done infinitely more. For, a person might do us untold services from an interested motive; whilst the Sacred Heart has been moved entirely by a love of infinite ardor, of measureless extent and intensity; it has loved us,

not from interest, but for our own good; not for its own profit, but for ours; and in spite of this do we refuse it our love?

The gentle behavior and delicate refinement with which some persons know so well how to temper their intercourse with others, are irresistibly attractive; but how insignificant such qualities become, when contrasted with the exquisite gentleness and delicacy of the Sacred Heart, so rich in resources capable of winning our affections? It knows that the amiability of infancy captivates us in a wonderful manner; would you have believed it, were not the fact so well known, that it was possible for one to hold in his arms an Infant God, come among men to put their hardness of heart to the test of his gentle attractions? Youth gains our affections by the elegance of manners and the enticing graces that attend it; and did not Jesus take upon Himself this state, in order to gain our hearts? Compassion not unfrequently leads to love; the former prepares the way; the latter enters by it; and did not Jesus also endeavor by the force of sufferings, endured with unspeakable sweetness, to gain an entrance into our hearts?

It remained for Him to give Himself to us as our spiritual food; and this gift is so unheard of, so wonderful, that, as it required the wisdom of a

God to conceive it, and the love of a God to bestow it, so it also required the word of a God to make us believe it. And is not this a proof of His love? Shall we be always insensible to these outpourings of love on the part of the Sacred Heart, which makes use of so many means to win our affections? Shall we, who are so easily captivated by a kind attention or a benevolent look, persist in our coldness?

Do favors exert a greater influence over us? But what greater favor can there be than that of having been loved by this Heart, and with a love so lasting in duration, so constant in afflictions, so generous in its gifts, so affectionate in its manifestation?

Perhaps, other favors are needed to move your heart. Know then that, not only may you hope for all manner of benefits, but that these benefits can be bestowed on you only by this Heart. In the Sacred Heart is found the common treasury of the Creator and creature. The Creator has placed there the fulness of knowledge and wisdom, of virtue and grace, of merits and favors, of redemption and salvation, of happiness and blessedness, in a word, of all perfection. The creature has all his riches in this immense treasury, so that he can find them nowhere else. It is, therefore,

from the divine Heart alone that the creature can get the knowledge of salvation, the pious sentiments which lead it, sanctifying grace, daily help, and final perseverance. Every good comes from it; and if it is true, and no one can doubt it, that the Blessed Virgin dispenses the favors of heaven, it is because she disposes of the treasures of this Heart with a maternal authority.

Have you the desire of passing some days less sadly on this earth, which is always a valley of tears and wretchedness? Confide, then, in this divine Heart. If you have put the human heart to the test during your lifetime, you know full well what it is. Those persons, who seemed most affectionate at the outset, gave us trouble afterwards; friends are often unfaithful. Equals and inferiors nearly always look to their own interests; relations, generally speaking, are such more from blood than devotedness. Discord happens even between brothers, even between those who have sworn eternal love at the foot of the altar. "The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable; who can know it?" (*Jerem. xvii. 9.*)

But were you devoted to the Sacred Heart, you would have to fear neither coldness, nor unfaithfulness. You may have recourse to this Heart at all times. It will hear with eagerness whatever

you may confide to it. In your troubles, it will be your consoler; participating in your joys, it will greatly augment them; in fear, it will be your buckler; in danger, your refuge; and whenever you speak to it, it will be ready to hear you. This is not all. Well pleased, I almost said, grateful for the homage you do it by your devotion, it will heap favors on you in greater abundance than your needs require.

Pious reader, give it a trial, by yielding yourself up to so touching a devotion, by consecrating yourself to a love so holy. Hope then, as your reward in this life, for all the fruits of which I have spoken; hope for a happy death, and above all, cherish the expectation of being one day swallowed up in this immense ocean of all good,—the Sacred Heart of Jesus,—to whom be glory and praise forever and ever.



NOTE.

IF we wish to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the exalted and varied objects the memory of which the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus can awaken in us, we must revert to the extent of the meaning of the word Heart, as well in ordinary language as in the Scriptures. Considered materially, it designates, in the first place, that organ whose function is to diffuse life with the blood through all the members. In its relations to a higher order, it is that organ which most readily experiences all the impressions of the soul and transmits to it the affections of the senses. Does anything agreeable take us by surprise? Instantly the heart experiences it. So likewise, when anything painful unexpectedly happens. This intimate relation, which exists between the soul and the heart, has given rise to those formulas so commonly used: "I bear you in my heart; I have driven you from my heart;" to those others, "noble heart, narrow heart, generous heart, mean heart," expressive of praise or blame. The Scriptures use the same language. The prophet David calls the Lord "the God of his heart." (*Ps.* lxxii. 26.) It is written of the Blessed Virgin, that she preserved all the things that she saw or heard in connection with Jesus, and stored them away in her heart: "But Mary kept all these words pondering in her heart." (*Luke* ii. 19.) On this subject Bellarmine teaches, "that the heart, in the lives of the Saints, is taken for the soul; so that it indicates the whole interior man, and, consequently, it is not to

be wondered at, if we attribute to the heart the acts of the understanding and will, since the soul comprises both." (*On the Sacrif.*, l. 1, cap. 6.) Since, therefore, no other metaphorical term can better express the soul, so no other corporeal figure can present a more natural and expressive symbol of it.

Moreover, as of all the powers of the soul, the will is the most fruitful, and as, among its operations, love is the most perfect, and "the source," as St. Thomas calls it, "of all spiritual motions," (*Summa*. 2. 2, *quæst.* 44, a. 5;) it frequently happens that the word heart is used to express love and will. The Scriptures, moreover, use it in this sense, not only in treating of the love and will of man, but to indicate the uncreated will of God, as well as His infinite, eternal love. To cite some instances: it is said of the Lord in Genesis, that "it repented Him that He had made man on the earth. And being touched inwardly with *sorrow of heart*, He said: I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth." (*Gen.* vi. 6.) "And I will raise up a faithful priest, who shall do according to my heart." (1 *Kings* ii. 35.) Again: "The Lord hath sought Him a man according to His own heart." (1 *Kings* xiii. 14.) "I have sanctified this house, which thou hast built, to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart shall be there always." (3 *Kings* ix. 3.)

Finally, under the name of heart, is frequently expressed also the inferior part of the soul, or, in other words, the sensitive appetite. It is thus that we are accustomed to say that our heart dreads humiliation, penance; and in this sense, it is said,

“that the heart is perverse above all things.” (*Jerem.* xvii. 9.) “But the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and these defile the man.” (*Matt.* xv. 18.) Although this inferior appetite in Jesus was wholly subject to the rule of reason, it did not fail, however, during His mortal career, to experience a horror for the suffering to which He willingly submitted; thus, in His prayer in the garden of Olive, He said: “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou.” (*Matt.* xxvi. 39.)

Such are the various significations of the word Heart. Sometimes it is taken as an organ of the human body; sometimes for the actions of man, for the soul, of which it is the principal instrument; for the will and love; even for the inferior appetite, and, finally, for all these taken together. This last meaning is more frequently used, according to the remarks of Bellarmin, quoted above: “So that it indicates the whole interior man.” And this acceptance is held not without reason. For what do these various significations express, if not the different aspects, or the distinct parts, the union and coëxistence of which, constitute one and the same object, which in ordinary language is called the heart? In fact, though the material, palpable and visible substance is very different from the spiritual substance which vivifies it, that is to say, from the soul; nevertheless, they are so closely united, that they form a whole, endowed with one and the same life and a common action. Thus, such expressions as: tender heart, feeling heart, my heart, compassionate heart,

or, I love you, I suffer for you, I rejoice with you with all my heart, mean not only the affections of the soul, but those also of the heart. They indicate the emotion, the excitement, the impression the affections of the soul produce on the fibres of the heart. The remark just made in regard to the heart especially, may be likewise applied to the whole man. In virtue of the wonderful union between soul and body, life and action are not attributed exclusively to the soul or the body, but to the whole man, that is, to both soul and body; because, in reality, both have a common share, according to their nature, in the actions of the whole man.

From the preceding remarks, it is easy to conclude, in the first place, how the two objects of our devotion, the one spiritual, the other material, are naturally united, and how the sensible object undoubtedly leads to the spiritual, which, by reason of the former, becomes more apparent to our mind; and this is an immense advantage when there is question of devotion to our Saviour. We see, therefore, that by the worship rendered to the Sacred Heart, Jesus Christ is fully glorified; since thus we honor all the actions of His great soul, all the sentiments which it cherishes, all the emotions to which it is subject, all the virtues which enrich it, all the joys which dilate it, all the griefs which afflict it, in a word, all the interior of Jesus. Now, is not this the purest incense that we can cause to mount heavenward? Is it not the heavenly manna of the soul?





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